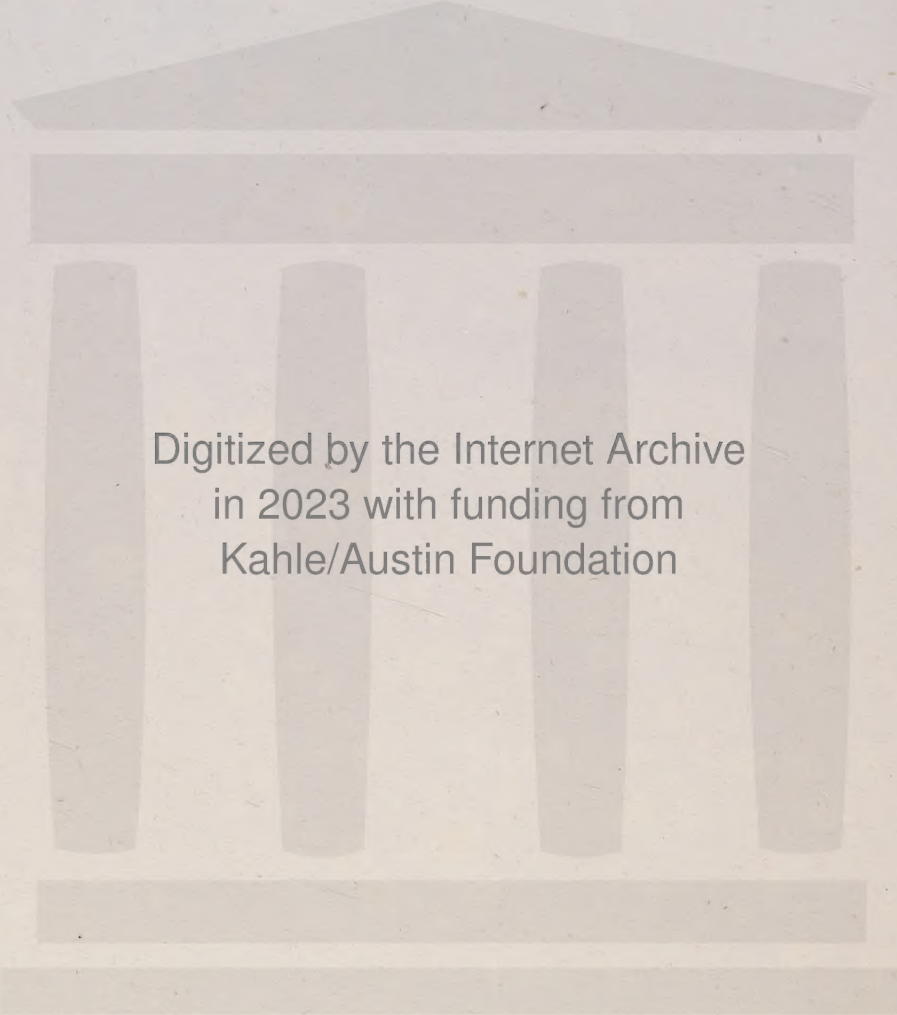


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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

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THE BOOK OF EXODUS

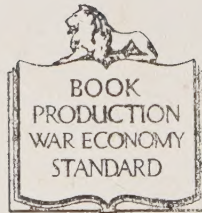
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The aim of THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE is to preserve all that is worth preserving of the modern interpretation of the Bible. It is the thought rather than the expression that is retained, though the expression has not been rejected when it seemed worthy. So much, however, has been done in the way of condensing, re-arranging, re-writing, adding to, and illustrating, that the sources have not as a rule been given. But so far as these are published sermons, they will be found in the Index to Modern Sermons which accompanies each volume. THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE contains also much that is new, written by the Editor and others.



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THE SPEAKER'S BIBLE

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

INTRODUCTION

1. *The Histories.*—More than half the Old Testament is composed of two great histories. The first begins with Genesis and ends with 2 Kings. It accounts for 46 per cent. of the whole of the Old Testament. The second includes 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and accounts for another 11 per cent. Exodus is the second volume of the first history, which includes eleven volumes in all. This counting omits Ruth, inserted next after Judges by the Greek translators because of its historical setting.

The first history is the story of the Hebrew tribes and the two Hebrew nations down to the release from actual prison conditions of the exiled Jehoiachin (c. 561 B.C.). It received its final editing probably about 500 B.C. This is the general opinion, but our judgment is that this date is a hundred years too early. The second history is the story of the origin and foundation of the exclusive post-exilic Jewish community as it was established round Jerusalem by Nehemiah and Ezra. It is a re-editing of the first history, but contains much extra material, some of which may have been gathered with other ends in view than that for which the editors used it. For the earlier period it is little more than genealogies, but after the time of David the historian goes more and more into detail in his zeal for the institutions of his own time.

Both histories were composed, generally speaking, in the way in which all histories have been composed. We deprecate the tendency to suggest that the writers were bad historians because their interests were essentially religious. They started with their own experience of their own times, and then looked back to the beginning. Each had his own theory of history.

Each sought to trace back to their origins the ideas and institutions of his own time, to account for the 'modern' situation with special reference to any element in it in which he was particularly interested, and finally, in so far as he was able, to draw the fitting moral from the story of the past. If their methods or their conclusions should be questioned by any adherent of our modern scientific method, then the defence is that the modern scientific historian does exactly the same. The differences lie solely in the kind of development which is regarded as being orthodox, and in the relation which is assumed to exist between the natural and the supernatural. Both the Biblical historians and the modern historians use earlier material, and both on occasion quote their authorities by name. The difference in the treatment of the earlier material is that where the moderns do not quote their sources, they usually rewrite the matter in their own words, whilst the Hebrew historian tended to repeat his original *verbatim*. If the modern historian did this, it would be plagiarism, and he would be liable in the courts for infringement of the property-right in the printed word. When the Hebrew historian did it, it was not plagiarism, for all Old Testament writers were anonymous, and there were no printers and publishers. All titles and literary ascriptions are definitely editorial, and some of them are the first attempts at literary criticism. If the charge should be made that the two histories differ each from other in that they set this or that in a different light, then we invite comparisons between Clarendon and Carlyle and Macaulay, or between Hobbes and John Richard Green. Truth consists, not in the exact knowledge of particular events, which is impossible apart from Omniscience and

Omnipresence, but in the correct understanding of the End, and in the proper subordination to that End of all the data. These ancients had not at their disposal our wealth of factual detail, but, perhaps even because of that, they had a clearer view of the End. They were not able, so to speak, to distinguish all the trees into genera and families, but they could certainly see the whole wood. They knew that God was assuredly the Beginning and the End. They fitted their 'facts' as best they could into that framework. Every theist knows that such a framework is the first essential of Truth. Every Christian knows that there is no path to Truth other than that which is entered by the one Gate, the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *The Sources.*—The literary sources of Exodus are those of Genesis, with the addition of three sets of editorial comments and 'seams,' as described below. The three main sources with their general characteristics have been described by Principal Wheeler Robinson in the Introduction to the Book of Genesis (vol. XXXII. no. 1, p. 4). In Exodus, the latest source, known as the Priestly Document (P), comprises chapters xxv.—xxxi. 18 a; xxxv. 4–xl.; most of chapter xvi., and other verses scattered throughout the book, of which the most notable are vi. 13–30; ix. 35 b; xii. 37 b, 40–42; xxxiv. 34 f, and most particularly vi. 2 f, when, according to P, the Sacred Name Jehovah was revealed to the Israelites for the first time. According to Northern tradition (E), this was revealed in iii. 14; whilst to the Southern tradition (J), it was known from the beginning (unless Gen. iv. 26 means that it was first known in the time of Enosh). After Exod. iii. 14 it is not always easy to distinguish accurately between J and E, since both documents thenceforward use the Sacred Name Jehovah. Indeed, for ordinary purposes it is best to regard everything in Exodus after this point as belonging to the composite JE, except in so far as it is definitely recognized as being P or as belonging to the second (Deuteronomic) type of editorial addition. In no book have all three original sources been dove-tailed in together with such ingenuity, or with such happy results, as in Exodus. A close and detailed analysis of the three sources can be found in the commentaries. We give here a general survey of the contribution of

each source. The main outline of the history is common to all three, but there are elements distinctive to each. The story of the birth of Moses and his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter is E, but the story of the flight to Midian is J. Both J and E know of Moses' sojourn in Midian, and both tell of his Midianite marriage, though J names his father-in-law Reuel and E names him Jethro. P gives no indication of any knowledge of the Midianite associations, though that may be only because P was satisfied with the JE account. When we come to the story of the first nine plagues, in J a first formal announcement is given to Pharaoh and Jehovah Himself acts; neither in E nor in P is there any announcement made to Pharaoh, and the agent in E is the rod in Moses' hand, but in P Moses instructs Aaron and the rod is in Aaron's hand. In J the purpose of the plagues is gradually to make Pharaoh retract his original refusal to let the people go, but in P Pharaoh's heart is hardened more and more. The plagues are signs and portents of Jehovah's mighty power. The magicians of Pharaoh at first seek to compete with Moses and Aaron, till they are crushed and cowed, and themselves are afflicted with the pest in the plague of boils, a plague which, with the third of gnats (mosquitoes?), is known only to P. Apart from the two plagues, the third and the sixth, which are exclusive to P, there are two, the fourth (dog-flies) and the fifth (cattle-murrain) which are exclusive to J. The second (frogs) is common to J and P, but the other four of the first nine, the first (the Nile-water turned to blood; in P it is *all* the water of Egypt), the seventh (hail), the eighth (locusts) and the ninth (darkness) are common to J and E. All three unite in the tenth, the slaying of the first-born of Egypt, though the actual story is in J and P. In P the waters of the Red Sea are divided and reunited at a sign from Moses, and during the passage of the Israelites they form a wall on either side of the marching host, but in J the wind is the agent of Jehovah and it blows from the East at His command. The journey from the Red Sea to Elim is E. The story of the murmuring in the wilderness of Sin is mainly P, the quails belong to P and the manna to both J and P. In chapter xvii. the reference to Rephidim is P, but the Massah-story is J, and the Meribah-story is E. The story of Sinai is common to all three, but the Decalogue (xx. 1–17) and the so-called Book of

the Covenant (xx. 22–xxiii. 33) are E, and so is the story of the Golden Calf and the account of the Tent of Meeting, as it is called (xxxiii. 7–11). All the details of the sanctuary and the vestments of the priests are P. The remainder is J, including a J-version of the laws of the Book of the Covenant and the choice of the tribe of Levi as priests because of their zeal, this latter story being dove-tailed in to the story of the Golden Calf.

3. *The General Scheme.*—We turn now to the purposes and aims of the various contributors to this composite eleven-volume history, and then to the aim of the book of Exodus in relation to the whole.

We have four periods of editorial activity, each with its own aims and theory of history. The first is from about 850 B.C. to about 750 B.C. During this period two different groups of men were at work, one in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the other in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Both groups were dealing with oral traditions, chiefly as they had accumulated at the various shrines throughout the two countries. So long as these traditions were purely oral, they were fluid and capable of continued growth, perhaps also of embellishment. As soon as they were written down they became solidified. They were not written down in either kingdom all at one time and place. The result is that even within the two groups we find survivals of one type and another from earlier and more primitive times, various strata solidified in successive generations, just like the various lava streams of different eruptions on the slopes of Vesuvius, and all of them bearing manifest traces of the vicissitudes of earlier days. The two traditions have much in common, but the sectional interests are equally clear. Northern interests are paramount in the Northern group which we know as E, and Southern interests in J. These differences are most evident in Genesis, where the stories of the ancestors and the tribes and the accounts of the origins of the various local and tribal sanctuaries predominate (see vol. XXXII. no. 1, p. 4). The *motif* of each group of traditions is the explanation of the present state of affairs, how the various laws and customs came to be instituted, but all of it embedded in the general story of the special care with which God watched over the destinies of the sons of Jacob-Israel. These two traditions run right

on into the times of the kingdoms, and traces of them have been detected in the Books of Samuel.

The second period of editorial activity marks the welding together of these two sources into one combined narrative, indicated by the symbol JE. Not all the discrepancies between J and E have been removed by any means, as the commentaries show, but by the frequent insertion of short passages, sometimes extending to a number of verses, but mostly not more than one verse or even one odd word, the editors have linked together their two sources in such a way as to make it most difficult sometimes to tell which may have been J and which may have been E. The deliberately didactic purpose which characterizes the later Deuteronomic editor already appears in the JE editor's command in Exod. xii. 25–27, where the Israelites are instructed to explain to the inquiring children the meaning of the Passover rites which they are celebrating. The date of the JE editorial activity is usually left undefined, but it must have been after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., when we may presume that the age-long rivalry and bitterness between North and South had at least temporarily ceased, and before it flamed out again two hundred years later with more virulence than ever in the strife between Jew and Samaritan. Perhaps the compilation of JE took place in Hezekiah's time. At any rate by the time of these editors the Hebrews had learned by sad experience a great deal about kings which they had not known before. They had become prophet-conscious, not only because of the activities of the ninth century prophets of the North, but also because of the eighth century prophets of the South, with Hosea as their Northern comrade in arms. Too often the kings in both north and south had exercised their control of the worship at the shrines to the detriment of true religion. They had introduced every type of heathen cult, either guided by worldly wisdom or driven by political necessity. Too often priests and cult officials had been subservient to them. And so we get the strong theocratic element in JE, consciously reinforcing the pre-Canaanite ideas of both J and E, strengthening what was already implicit in the old nomad traditions. This shows itself in the patriarchal stories of Genesis, in the emphasis on Moses as the man with whom God spake face

to face, and, at its strongest, in the doings of Elijah and Elisha as portrayed in 1 and 2 Kings. In these last two Books the prophets are definitely dominant in Northern affairs, and story after story successively points out the necessity of treating these holy men of God with proper respect. Not yet do we find the priest dominant. That element begins to show itself in D, and reaches its full flower in P. Joshua is the minister of the 'Tent of Meeting' (Exod. xxxiii. 11-E), whilst in P, Aaron is the priest of the 'Tabernacle.' Some scholars think that the JE editor is responsible for the introduction of Aaron into the J narratives. Whether this is so or not, in JE Aaron is either a shadow of Moses receiving from him his instructions, or else, when he acts independently, his conduct leaves a great deal to be desired. He makes the Golden Calf (Exod. xxxii. 4), and later he opposes Moses' leadership (Num. xii.).

The third period of editorial activity belongs to the sixth and (as we maintain) to the fifth centuries. These editors were in the Deuteronomic tradition. These later Deuteronomic writers insisted upon the centralization of the worship at Jerusalem (the general opinion is that this was original in the first Deuteronomic document read before Josiah in 621 B.C., but some few scholars dispute this). They regarded it as their chief weapon in the warfare against religious adulteration and syncretism. They followed the teaching of the eighth century prophets with their insistence on humanitarian virtues, particularly on behalf of the depressed classes. They followed them also in their emphasis on the necessary connexion between obedience to God and prosperity on the one hand, and between apostasy and disaster on the other. They insisted also upon that new interpretation of the Covenant between God and Israel which lifted the idea of the relations between a God and His people out of the ordinary ruck of Semitic ideas and made it the foundation of the Biblical doctrine of Election with its emphasis on the sure, unwavering, prevenient love of God. All these prophetic teachings they combined with the insistence upon Jerusalem and the Temple there, as the only legitimate place of worship, using this as the spearhead for the effective enforcement of the whole body of doctrine and teaching. Such was their theory of history and of the workings of Providence, and they built up this first great

history as the instrument of their attack upon the dull mass of un- and half-belief in Israel. They took the JE history and the earlier D writings, and built them up into a prophetic and moral history of their people, losing in the process no opportunity of pointing out the morals which they desired to inculcate. They fixed the dominating *motif* of the whole of Jewish history, and their influence is plain to see from Deuteronomy onwards. Their work begins to show itself in Exodus in the form of numerous insertions throughout all the JE excerpts. These insertions do not usually extend to more than an odd verse or two, and are often no more than an odd phrase, but short as they usually are, they are enough to impress the Deuteronomic point of view upon the whole. These men did their work amazingly well. They copied their sources *verbatim*, dovetailing them all in together. We have no complaint against their use of their material to inculcate their own ideas and theories. It is what all historians do, for even those who aim at purely 'factual' history have most of all their preconceived modern evolutionary theory or their determined denial of any theory at all (which is equally a theory) into which perforce they embed their material. The only quarrel we have with this kind of thing is when the *motif* is wrong. The Deuteronomists, being primarily believers in an active God, were, within their limits, right.

The last period of editorial activity belongs either to the fifth century, or, as we think, to the first quarter of the fourth century after the activity of Ezra, which we take with most moderns to have begun in 397 B.C. The reason why we prefer a later date than is customary, is because Nehemiah's reforms (c. 444 B.C.) were definitely based on the Deuteronomic teaching (Neh. xiii. 1-3 and Deut. xxiii. 3-5), and because it seems to us that Ezra's regulations for the Feast of Booths were nearer to D than to P (cf. Neh. viii. with Deut. xxxi. 11 f.; xvi. 13-15 and Lev. xxiii., Num. xxix.). This period marks the interpolation of what we know as the Priestly Document into the great Deuteronomic history. Here we wish to make it plain that the first great history is Deuteronomic. It is the second great history, that of the Chronicler, with its supreme interest in Temple institutions, which is dominated by P. The Priestly Code is the product of the orthodox Jewish community of post-exilic times, with the idea of *Habdallah*

(Separation) as its leading *motif*. This *motif* is dominant in P from the beginning, since the creation itself is a series of separations. It is therefore not true to say of P that it is a collection of ritual laws and ceremonies. This is true only of the latter part of the P-material in Exodus and of Leviticus, which is entirely P, apart from the somewhat earlier Holiness Code (H) of the same general tradition. Even the very laws and regulations and all the genealogies and numberings of P have their function within the larger purpose of tracing in every phase and department of life that Separation which the editors believed was the most important thing in life. Everything is separated, the clean from the unclean, the holy from the profane, the covenant people from the heathen. Viewed in this light P is of course a development of D, since ideas of Separation from the people of Canaan are manifest in D. But in P the particular stress is upon all those rules and regulations of life and conduct and worship by which that Separation might be made thoroughly and completely effective. And so these Priestly editors did not adopt a wholesale attitude to their sources as did the Deuteronomic writers. They merely interpolated their own P-material where it seemed to them to be most suitable, and they added such later material of their own as would bring the regulations up to date (*e.g.*, Exod. xxx.). Much of the P-material is post-exilic. The commentaries show the way in which often the D-regulations are an advance on JE-regulations, and in which Ezekiel, H, and P show still further developments, all seeking, amongst other objects, to meet the needs of a community changing over from a nomadic to an agricultural life, and in the end becoming more and more urbanized. But other P-material is as old as anything in the Bible, and represents those survivals of primitive ritual and belief which persist amazingly amongst all peoples side by side with whatever new ideas may have become dominant. When, in another generation, it was deemed politic to produce an up-to-date and thoroughly revised history, we get the work of the Chronicler, and this, as we have said, is the true P-history.

4. *The Title of the Book.*—So much for the general scheme of which Exodus forms a part. We turn now to the Book of Exodus itself. The name of this second volume of the long

Deuteronomic history comes from the Greek (Septuagint) translators. Not only did they attempt to put into the correct historical order the various books of their Bible (which included the Apocrypha), but wherever the Hebrew title of a book meant nothing to a Greek, they invented a new title which did mean something to him, and had the additional merit of being descriptive of the contents. And so this volume came to be called Exodus. The word is Jerome's latinization of the Greek word for 'out-going, marching-out,' and has long since been adopted into our common English speech to describe a 'going-out' that is final, complete, and wholesale. This is exactly true of the Exodus from Egypt. They went out in a body, all of them, man, woman and child. They left nothing behind them, either of their own or of the Egyptians', that they could possibly carry away with them. They were fully determined never to return. We follow the Greek tradition with Jerome's modification of it in respect both of the order of the books and of their titles, because for four hundred years the Bible of the Christian Church was the Greek Bible, and after that for a thousand years or so it was Jerome's Latin translation from the Hebrew (from the Greek for the Psalms) which is known as the Vulgate. This latter is still the Bible of the Roman Church.

The function of the Book of Exodus within the general scheme is to tell the story of the events which led to the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, and of their beginnings as a nation. It includes the story of two of the greatest events of Israelite history, namely the passing through the Red Sea and the giving of the Law on Sinai. These two events, with the addition of the establishment of the Davidic line and of the building of the Temple, are the four great landmarks of Jewish history. Nothing else that ever happened to Israel quite equalled them, and the stories of two of them are told in this Book of Exodus.

The Book begins with the birth of Moses, who under God was the Deliverer, and later became Law-giver, Prophet, and Priest. We have the story of his upbringing, his flight to Midian, his commission to free the Israelites, and his first unsuccessful endeavour when he pleads with Pharaoh. Next we have the ten plagues, rising in a climax to the slaying of the first-born of Egypt and the institution of the Passover. And

so the people set out. They journey to Etham, they are miraculously delivered at the Red Sea, and they come to Elim. From thence on to the wilderness of Sin, then to Rephidim-Massah-Meribah, until they come to Sinai. There they are made the people of God. They receive the Law by which they are to live, and the Book ends with the setting up of the Tabernacle on the first day of the second year of the departure from Egypt.

4. *The Date of the Exodus.*—What was the date of the Exodus? Here is perilous ground upon which even angels may fear to tread. This is not because there is difference of opinion, since in many of these ancient matters the paucity of the evidence must necessarily leave a margin of uncertainty. The trouble has arisen in the last ten years, since Professor Garstang's publication in 1931 of the results of his excavation of the ancient site of Jericho. He held strongly to the 'early' date (c. 1400 B.C.) for the invasion under Joshua. This in itself is no occasion for undue concern, since every man is entitled to his own opinion when he has faithfully and honestly considered the evidence. The unfortunate feature has been due to the fact that some writers have used his evidence as an occasion for the advocacy of the verbal inspiration of Scripture. This again is no occasion for undue concern, for the same liberty must be allowed for intelligent, informed judgment here also. The unfortunate feature has been the introduction of a virulence and bitterness into the discussion which one had hoped belonged to days gone by. For our part, we propose to state the fact of the two chief dates for the destruction of Jericho, the 'early' date of c. 1400 B.C. and the 'late' date of c. 1180 B.C., assuming in each case that the actual exodus was a generation or more earlier. Then we state our own view of the matter. Readers must study the evidence for themselves, and come to their own conclusions. The case for the 'early' date can be examined at length in Dr. J. W. Jack's *The Date of the Exodus* (1925), in Professor Garstang's *Joshua-Judges* (1931), and in Dr. Jack's regular contributions on archaeology in *The Expository Times*. The case for the 'later' date can be examined in the late Dr. Burney's Schweich Lectures (1917), *Israel's Settlement in Canaan*, and especially in Professor H. H. Rowley's monograph reprinted from the

Ryland's Library Bulletin for April 1938 entitled *Israel's Sojourn in Egypt*. All these studies are careful, thorough, and scholarly examination of the evidence, quite free from those unfortunate elements which have marred some of the recent discussions.

The great virtue of the 'early' date is that it fits in with the reckoning of 1 Kings vi. 1. In our view, if we hold to this date then all the genealogies have to go, and we do not think it is possible to construct one scheme which will fit in with all the Biblical evidence. If they came out of Egypt, for instance, in the fifteenth century B.C., we do not see how they could have built Pithom and Raamses (Exod. i. 11). Further we do not think the external evidence warrants the early date. Actually Garstang is the only working archæologist of any standing who has come to this conclusion of the early date, even upon his evidence. Vincent, Albright, and Flinders Petrie are against it, and all these three are archæologists of long experience and of the first rank. Starkey's evidence for the destruction of Lachish points to the later date. When Professor T. H. Robinson said (E.T. xlvii. 1935-36, p. 34) that 'with very few exceptions serious Old Testament scholars have abandoned the nineteenth dynasty (i.e., late) date for the Exodus,' his statement leaves a very great deal to be desired. He had forgotten such names as Dhorme, Gunkel, Hempel, Wardle, Lods, Duncan, Rowley, and others, men whose scholarship in these matters is of the very first rank.

The late date is that which makes Rameses II the Pharaoh of the Oppression, and Merenptah the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The date of the Exodus would thus be c. 1225 B.C. Our view is substantially the same as that of Professor Rowley, and we think, with Rowley and the above-mentioned archæologists who have personally examined the excavations, that Garstang's own evidence supports the later date. It involves the acceptance of the theory that the tribes which came out of Egypt were principally the Joseph tribes, having with them part of Levi and of Simeon, two tribes which tried to establish themselves round Shechem but failed. Judah was a mixed tribe with a central Hebrew core to which also Simeon attached himself. This Hebrew core shared the experiences of Sinai and moved into Canaan from the South, perhaps earlier than the Joseph tribes

over the Jordan near Jericho, but certainly independently. Such a theory would account not only for the similarities between the J and E traditions, but also for the differences between them. The main destruction of Jericho, which undoubtedly took place c. 1400 B.C., we take to be that which belongs to the invasion by the Habiru of the Tell-el-Amarna letters, which we find in the Bible as the return of Jacob-Israel from Padan-aram accompanied by many Aramaean elements. There is a later, though smaller, destruction of Jericho, and this we take to be the Ephraimite invasion under Joshua, though in the Bible the two disasters have been fused together. We admit frankly that this demands a certain amount of adjustment of the Bible records, but so does the other theory also. The 'late' date in our view does not entail the wholesale rejection of external evidence which the 'early' theory demands, particularly the rejection of all the names and all the details of the Habiru invasion according to the Tell-el-Amarna letters. None of the names of the local governors agrees with the Biblical narratives, and the course of the invasion is quite different. Nevertheless, as we have said, there is considerable division of opinion on the matter. In the main the archaeologists are in favour of the later date, and so far as we can judge, Old Testament scholars are approximately equally divided between the two dates.

5. *The Crossing of the Red Sea.*—This mighty saving act of the Lord was never forgotten by Israel. It marked the culmination of that deliverance from the House of Bondage which gave birth to Israel as the People of God. The actual event was commemorated in the Exodus Song of Moses (Exod. xv. 1-18). This song may well be a later extension of the Song of Miriam (xv. 21), and it undoubtedly bears traces of having been completed after the invasion of Canaan (verses 14 and 15). In its present form it has had an influence on Hebrew and Jewish thought throughout the ages which cannot be exaggerated. It has shared with the other Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.) the high honour of having been a Sabbath Canticle of the Jews since before the Christian Era. On four Sabbath afternoons out of six in early times the synagogue Jews heard one half of this Song. On the other two afternoons they heard the Song

of Israel (Num. xxi. 17 f). This means that very few passages of Scripture were more familiar than this to Jewish ears, and this familiarity is continued by its place in the modern Jewish Prayers for the Sabbath Morning Service.

The very great importance of the Song appears in two ways. The first way is illustrated by Rev. xv. 2-4. Just as the redeemed Israel of old sang the Song of Moses on the shores of the Red Sea, so the new redeemed Israel in Heaven sing 'the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb' on the shores of the glassy sea. The story of the destruction of the Egyptians is told partly as an historical event, but partly also as the realization in actual history of the great primeval victory of Jehovah over Rahab-Tiamat, the great monster of the primeval ocean of chaos. The outline of the old myth is told in vol. XXXII. no. 1, p. 5. Here the phrases of the old are borrowed to describe this new triumph of the Lord. He plunges them in the mighty deeps (verses 5 and 8; the word is *tehom*, which means not the depths of our salt seas, but the depths of the primeval ocean into which, according to one variant, the defeated monster was cast). Later the ancient myth and the Red Sea triumph are both caught up into the hope of the new deliverance from Babylon (Isa. li. 9-11). The Monster is identified with every enemy of God in every age, Egypt (Isa. xxx. 7 'Rahab that is stilled'), Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. li. 34: cf. the Book of Jonah), the kings who have dominated Israel (Dan. vii. 17), and the beast which comes up out of the sea (Rev. xiii. 1). So the great fact of God's continued mercy and saving grace is continually retold, but this setting of it started from Exod. xv., and the memory of it was kept alive not least by the fact that this has been one of the Sabbath Canticles of the synagogue from a very early date.

The other way in which this Song has exercised a great influence on Jewish thought is that it has been the seed bed for the growth of the idea of the Kingdom of God. Just as 2 Sam. vii. has been the seed bed for Messianic ideas, and the Deuteronomic Song of Moses for Deuteronomic ideas of obedience and gratefulness for the continued mercies of God, so Exod. xv. 1-18 has been the *fons et origo* of the Kingdom of God theme in the Old Testament.

Again and again reference is made to this canticle, and its importance in this respect cannot be over-estimated.

6. *The Passover*.—This ceremony came to be the great national celebration of the Jews, the memorial of their deliverance and the beginning of their independence as a nation. Perhaps this is chiefly why the Romans, during their occupation of Palestine, were always especially careful to see to it that Jerusalem was well garrisoned at Passover, as the most likely time for an insurrection. There was a prophecy that Messiah would appear in Nisan, at the full moon of which month the Passover was killed. Pilate knew that it would not take much at Passover to set the whole country ablaze.

The origin of the Passover is lost in the mists of pre-Mosaic Semitic antiquity. Some say that it was the nomad's spring offering of the firstlings of the flocks, others that it received its name from a 'limping' (the Hebrew name *Pesach* might mean this) dance around the altar, whilst yet others say that it is related to protective rites for the house or tent against the evil influences of the Spring full moon. We know from ancient Hebrew custom that it was originally a home festival (Exod. xii. 21-23, J), and that the JE editors enjoined its continued observance as a memorial of the Exodus (Exod. xii. 25-27). For many years after their entrance into Canaan, the children of Israel seem to have observed the Passover rite in their own homes, and then celebrated the Canaanite agricultural pilgrimage of Unleavened Bread at the local shrine immediately afterwards, for the two festivals, one nomad from the desert and the other agricultural in Canaan, coincided in time. They tended to become one pilgrimage, and both of them to be commemorative of the Exodus. This shows itself even in J (Exod. xii. 34). The centralization of the worship tended at first to make the Passover a mere introduction to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deut. xvi. 1-8), but in P the family association is most carefully preserved for the Passover, and the two are made quite distinct (Exod. xii. 1-13 and 14-20). Various changes have taken place during the centuries, but the association of the Passover lamb with unleavened bread, the offering of the first-born, and the deliverance from Egypt has never been broken, and it still is essentially a family festival. Was the

Passover ever a sacrifice? Inasmuch as P insists on the family nature of the ceremony (Exod. xii. 1-13), we must assume that the family observance continued side by side with such Temple celebrations as are described in 2 Chron. xxx. and xxxv., and Ezra vi. In New Testament times when the lamb was presented at the Temple, killed there, and its blood splashed against the altar, the whole of the flesh was taken away for the domestic meal. Nothing of the lamb was ever burned on the altar, and the ritual conforms to none of the types of Levitical sacrifices. If therefore the word sacrifice is to be applied to an animal which is taken away from the Temple to be eaten by clean and unclean alike (2 Chron. xxx. 17, 19), and only the blood is dashed against the altar, then the word sacrifice must have a connotation wide enough to include any kind of slaughtered beast or gift whatever its nature or purpose or ultimate destination.

7. *The Ten Commandments*.—As these commandments stand now they show considerable influence from D and P. All the second commandment, for instance, after the first short, crisp command is D. After the first sentence of the fourth, we have two verses due to the Deuteronomic editors and one due to the last P editors of all. The conclusion of the tenth is D. Generally wherever a commandment is expanded to be longer than sixth, seventh, or eighth, we have editorial additions by the D or the P editors. The original ten words, according to the canons of literary analysis consisted of the first phrases only. This reduces each one to two or four Hebrew words, except for the first which would be a little longer, and so we have exactly the kind of thing which would be carved on the two tables of stone. The general opinion is that the shorter form of these commandments goes back to Moses. They are neither J nor E. The difficulty of this is that there does not appear to have been any objection to images before the eighth century, and further, there was apparently no particular emphasis on the Sabbath before the Exile. That there were 'Ten Words' is attested by Deut. x. 4, but there is evidence of some doubt about the way in which the ten were counted. For instance both the Lutheran and the Romans make our One and Two into the First commandment, and split our Ten into two, though

they differ in their order of Nine and Ten. This resolves part of the Mosaic difficulty. With respect to the Sabbath difficulty, there is evidence of the pre-exilic celebration of the Sabbath as a special day, though the severe restrictions belong to the post-exilic period.

8. *The Book of the Covenant and the Code of Hammurabi*.—The section from xx. 22–xxiii. 33 is known as the Book of the Covenant (*cf.* xxiv. 7). It is a very ancient collection of judgments, and corpus of early case-law. It is not as old as the basis of the Ten Words, which probably go back as far as Moses, since the main interest of the people concerned in these laws is agricultural. Some of them deal with vineyards and cornfields (xxii. 5, 6), and with the sowing of fields (xxiii. 10 f.) and fallow years. We have the three pilgrimages of Canaan (xxiii. 14–17), but curiously no Passover. If therefore there were tribes who never left Canaan after the return of Jacob from Padan-aram, the Book of the Covenant may very well have belonged to them. This would account for its undoubted antiquity, its agricultural interest and its neglect of the old nomadic environment. But the chief interest in this Book of the Covenant is in its relation to the Code of Hammurabi, sixth king of the first known dynasty of Babylon (c. 2000 B.C.). These ancient laws were found in 1901–02, engraved on a block of black diorite, some seven feet high. On this stele is a bas-relief of King Hammurabi, receiving the laws from the sun-god Shamash, together with forty-nine columns of cuneiform script, of which five have been erased. The number of laws which have been preserved is 248. They deal with a much wider and more developed civilization than does the Hebrew Book of the Covenant. They contain laws of property, land laws, trade regulations, family law, criminal law. The rate of wages is specified; there are regulations concerning navigation and slavery laws. But where the two sets of laws deal with the same subjects, there are many similarities. The strictness of the penalties varies. They are of the same type in each case, sometimes Hammurabi is the stricter, and sometimes the Hebrew code is stricter. The general verdict is that both laws are developments of general Semitic custom, each in its own way and according to the local needs. They are the first codifications in each

case of such case-law as still holds the pre-eminent place in our English courts.

9. *The Priesthood and The Tent of Meeting*.—There remain two further matters which are worthy of special mention. They are two cases where the application of literary analysis of the Pentateuch resolves what at first sight is great confusion. The one is the personnel of the priesthood; the other is the confused accounts of the Tent of Meeting. The question as to who really were priests and who were not, is raised by the consecration of the sons of Levi after their loyalty at the episode of the Golden Calf. The Golden Calf incident itself is E, but the choice of the Levites is J (xxxii. 26–29, especially 29). For a full discussion of the development of the priesthood and the variations through the centuries of its personnel, see *A Companion to the Bible*, pp. 418–427. At first there seems to have been no restriction on the priesthood, but from early times there was a preference for a Levite (Judges xvii. 5 and 10). This was probably due to the fact that Moses, who acted as priest in the earliest days, was a Levite. In Canaan the situation seems to have been that the Levites were priests at the Southern local shrines (high-places), whilst there were non-Levitical priests at the Northern high-places. The descendants of Moses were priests at Dan in the far north, and the descendants of Aaron probably at Bethel, whilst the Jerusalem priests were Zadokites, descendants of the old Jebusite priesthood, reinforced during the time of David by the survivors of the House of Eli, the old priests of the Ark from Egypt (1 Sam. ii. 27–29). Josiah is said to have exterminated all the non-Levitical priests, and to have attempted to bring all the Levitical priests to Jerusalem to share in the service there. This is the situation visaged in D ‘the priests the Levites.’ But this arrangement did not prove practicable (2 Kings xxiii. 9). The Levites were admitted to the Temple, but only in a subordinate position. After the Exile, in P we find that the Jerusalem priests (these being the only priests now remaining) are called the sons of Aaron, and all other Levites are definitely subordinate to them. The curious thing is that though these post-exilic priests are called the sons of Aaron, yet two-thirds of them were Zadokites, and not Aaronites at all. The suggestion is made that the Aaronites moved

to Jerusalem during the Exile, and remained dominant afterwards, though numerically they were exceeded by the returning Zadokites. On these lines, the variations of Exodus, including the exaltation of Aaron in P compared with his minor and somewhat invidious position in the earlier documents, can be resolved into something like an orderly historical scheme.

In a similar way we have a development in the matter of the Tent of Meeting. The original E Tent of Meeting seems to have been an ordinary Bedawin tent, containing the holy things, with the Ephraimite Joshua as its attendant. But the tent is not Moses' own tent, nor just any tent. It is a special Tent where Moses receives the word of God. What was the relation of the Ark to this Tent of Meeting of E must be uncertain, since all that we know of the construction of the Ark is from P. There must have been some E-details of the Ark which the P-editors did not retain, for the Ark moved at the head of the marching column in the Wilderness (JE, Num. x. 33). The conclusion is that there was an Ark and that there was a Tent of Meeting in the early E-traditions; but neither in the Pentateuch (E) nor in the Shiloh stories do the two seem to have any connexion. The P-Tabernacle is a much more elaborate affair. It moves in the centre of the marching hosts, attended by thousands of Levites. It contained a Holy-of-Holies, in which was the Ark, and an outer Holy Place wherein was the Seven-branched candlestick and the Table for the Shewbread, and perhaps an altar of Incense. All this seems to have been a development of the old E-Tent of Meeting remodelled on the lines of the Temple. The measurements, for example, of the two chambers, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, of Solomon's Temple and Ezekiel's draft are exactly double those of the Tabernacle. The same furniture was in each, except that there was no Ark in the post-exilic temple, and that Solomon's Temple had ten lampstands instead of the seven-branched candlestick, which however was in Herod's Temple. We see then that the Tabernacle of P is a description of what undoubtedly was the old E-Tent of Meeting, but influenced by what the writers knew of the Temple of their own day.

10. *Books for Further Study of Exodus.*—There is one full-scale commentary in English, namely

that in the Westminster Commentaries by A. H. McNeile (1917), and there are two very useful smaller commentaries, that by W. H. Bennett in the Century Bible (n.d.) and that by S. R. Driver in the Cambridge Bible (1911). These latter two supplement each other, and both need to be studied.

For fuller details of literary analysis, we must refer to the books already recommended in connexion with Genesis, namely *The Hexateuch* edited by J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby (vol. ii., 1900), *Pentateuchal Criticism* by D. C. Simpson (2nd ed., 1924), and *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* by W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson (1934).

For other special studies, we recommend, apart from books already mentioned, S. A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi* (1903), or, for a translation of the entire code, C. H. W. Johns in *H.D.B.* v. (1904) 584-612. We refer again to C. M. Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* which, apart from its supreme value in providing the proper nomadic background, is a most delightful book for occasional and desultory reading. The general modern point of view of the Old Testament is to be found in *Record and Revelation* (ed. H. Wheeler Robinson, 1938), and *A Companion to the Bible* (ed. T. W. Manson, 1939).

NORMAN H. SNAITH.

Every Man's Heritage

Exod. i. 8.—'Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.'

THIS is a surprising statement. There must be gaps in the knowledge of even a king, but one expects him to be familiar with the names and achievements of the chief architects of his country's fortunes. Joseph, after all, was not just one of the many ordinary Hebrews who had settled in Egypt and of whose existence the king might be pardonably unaware. At a critical time in Egypt's history, when a famine was imminent, Joseph, by his foresight and wise administration, had saved the country from the peril of starvation. But for him, indeed, many must have perished, probably this prospective occupant of the throne among them. A grateful king, recognizing his timeous and peculiar

service, had conferred many honours upon him and an appreciative people had acknowledged their great indebtedness. Yet we read of this man whose name was once on every tongue that he was unknown to a later occupant of Egypt's throne. Surely a strange state of affairs—as strange as we should consider an American's ignorance of Abraham Lincoln, or a compatriot's ignorance of Cromwell or of Pitt, of Gladstone or of Disraeli.

The sacred record makes no secret of the fact that this Pharaoh who reached his lifework so ill-furnished in mind was soon involved in trouble. And the cause of his trouble was, unquestionably, his ignorance of the past. Unaware of Joseph's name and work, and equally unaware that Joseph's race was accorded a place in Egypt's life because of Joseph's service, he began to resent the presence of the Israelites, proceeded to treat them roughly and thereby effected his own downfall. If only he had known something of his country's history how different must his story have been!

This Pharaoh's case is, of course, no isolated one. Many have achieved less than they might have done and others have been overtaken by irretrievable disaster because of their ignorance of or indifference to the past. Some of them were young and gifted. But it is not enough to be young and gifted. Deference must be shown to the accumulated wisdom of the ages and attention paid to the lessons which other men have learned.

When we come to ask how this Pharaoh reached his throne so ill-equipped for his life-work two possible explanations offer themselves. Either he was given insufficient instruction or else he declined to be instructed. Either his father left something of his duty undone, or the son, proud of his own gifts, regarded such teaching as he may have been given as entirely irrelevant. They are the explanations of more disasters than one, and if we are wise we shall give them both our serious consideration.

1. *It is possible that the young king's father failed to inform him of Joseph and of his work.*—If he did so fail, then he was guilty of a very serious omission. It was his duty as a father to fit his son adequately for the important office he would some day be called to fill. Nothing was more important than careful instruction in his country's history, information

concerning outstanding men, and guidance as to the principles which others had observed and which he would be wise not to disregard. Lacking such instruction and information and guidance, how could the young king be expected to succeed? He was bound to make mistakes, but the responsibility for such mistakes, if his father failed adequately to instruct him, was not entirely his.

There is a duty which one generation owes to its successor, which the elderly owe to those who are young. Facts which are necessary for the successful fulfilment of life must be imparted. The story of customs and standards and institutions, whose claims youth so often questions, must be told. The experience of foregoing generations must be made available. If one generation fails to discharge such a duty in respect of its successor it is guilty of a very serious omission. Life itself, their country and its traditions, the Church of their fathers and the message it proclaims, will all tend to be treated lightly, with consequences of a very grave nature.

To-day there is widespread concern that so many young people appear to disregard standards and principles which previous generations studiously observed and that so many young people are jettisoning, as so much useless impedimenta, values which their forbears made it their business to honour. But for such a state of things we must be careful as to whom we attribute responsibility. It may be that some of the young people in question refuse to be taught. But it may be that their elders have failed to teach. There is a volume of experience and wisdom to which every generation has a right to be introduced. There are traditions concerning which they must be informed. There are standards and principles in which they must receive instruction. If, through no fault of their own, they know nothing of such things, the mistakes of which they are guilty in consequence cannot, surely, be their entire responsibility.

It is significant that throughout our land to-day there is an emphasis upon youth, and, particularly, upon the importance of training and educating youth. They are being gathered into clubs and centres whose main purpose is not entirely recreational. They are given instruction in a variety of subjects, especially in those which contribute to good citizenship. It

would appear to be realized that, if we are to have good citizens, some training in citizenship must be given. All of which is good so far as it goes. But let none of us imagine that such training is exhaustive and that we may leave the entire responsibility of training youth to the State. The Church has an important part to play and, likewise, the home. Instruction in the laws of God is as necessary as instruction in the laws of man. Information concerning the family honour is as necessary as information concerning the honour of the nation. If it is realized by the State that we cannot blame youth for its flippancy and irresponsibility so long as youth is uninstructed, it is surely time that both the Church and the home realized that some responsibility devolves upon them for equipping the youth of the land for the strenuous business of living. There are facts concerning the deepest things in life which we in the Church and in the home just daren't depend upon youth chancing to 'pick up' as a result of certain contacts, but which we must make it our business to speak of firmly and with intelligence. We owe it to youth. It is an obligation which is laid upon us to put them in possession of everything which will enable them to preserve their morning splendour and to live their lives with profit to their fellows and with honour to God.

This young Pharaoh who reached his throne so ill-equipped was soon involved in trouble. And the connexion between his lack of knowledge and his trouble is indisputable. If his ignorance of Joseph and all his works was due to slackness on the part of his father, then his father must share responsibility for the young lad's sorry failure.

2. *But the responsibility for this young king's ignorance concerning Joseph may not have been his father's but his own.*—Perhaps the father was willing to teach. Perhaps the son was unwilling to learn. Perhaps the heir-apparent reckoned Joseph and even his own father as 'back-numbers' who could impart nothing of any consequence. Enamoured of his own gifts, persuaded that wisdom was born with him, perhaps he treated his elders with disrespect.

There have been such youths in all generations—lads and girls who have regarded with some amusement all endeavours to instruct them and who have regarded the past as an irrelevance to

which they need pay no attention whatsoever. Blessed with gifts their elders gave no evidence of possessing and granted opportunities denied their forbears, they have thought more of their ability to instruct than of their need of instruction. But the end of the story has always been the same. Careless of custom, indifferent to tradition, heedless of the sanctities, they have sooner or later made shipwreck of their lives and have had cause to regret their arrogance and their unwillingness to learn. There is a past we forget at our peril. There are lessons which we refuse to be taught to our own hurt. There are sanctities we disregard to our later sorrow. The Josephs of previous generations may have been unfamiliar with much that is familiar to us, they may have lived in days less enlightened than ours and much that they thought good may have been superseded by something infinitely better, but to regard them as incapable of teaching us anything is both foolish and dangerous. Had this young Pharaoh known something of Joseph, something of his methods and his principles, how different must his story have been. And how different must the story of other youths have been had they listened with greater patience and interest to what their elders said.

The men and women of previous generations, let us be clear, had their limitations, but they were not the fools and dotards some who are young would have us believe. Many of the blessings we enjoy, and which we tend to take for granted, are ours by reason of sacrifices on the part of those whom some of us affect to despise. We are held in esteem, both at home and abroad, not simply because of our likeable and attractive disposition, but because of the integrity and achievements of the race and the family to which we belong. We have succeeded where others have failed and triumphed over temptations to which others have succumbed, not simply because of our own resolve, but because of the spiritual capital we have inherited. But for Joseph, the likelihood is that this young Pharaoh would have had no throne to ascend. And, but for our forbears, we should not be so fortunately placed as in so many instances we are. We owe a debt to the past. And we owe a deference to the past. There were giants in those days—men and women whose lives are fit to be our guiding stars and whose example we would do well to follow.

Professor Baillie, speaking in one of his books of youth's sometimes unfortunate attitude to the past, puts the position in a very succinct and memorable way. 'When the question is, "What are the laws of the electrical constitution of matter?" or "How am I to build an internal combustion engine?" then indeed,' he says, 'we moderns have it all over our forefathers. But when the question is, "What is the ultimate purport of existence?" or "How can we face up to life well?" then you and I feel that we can often sit at the feet of those ancients in almost silent humility.' And surely that is true. The things which kept our fathers loyal to heaven and home cannot be a matter of indifference to us. The things they considered worth living for and sometimes worth dying for cannot all have lost their significance. The principles by which they chose to be guided and to which, under every circumstance, they chose to be true cannot have had relevance only for their generation. The faith through which they 'subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens' is surely worth investigating.

During the last war when, together with his troops, General Allenby served in Palestine, the two books which were his constant companions were the Bible and Sir George Adam Smith's *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. He is said to have studied them every morning, and Sir Archibald Wavell, who wrote the story of Allenby's life, records the fact that, as a result of their General's study, the army under his command, when their water-supply ran short, was able to trace, locate, and revive the use of many long-forgotten wells. Like Allenby and his men, we travel a road which once echoed the tramp of other feet. If we are wise, we shall try to discover the sources of their inspiration and whence they derived the strength which brought them successfully through. There are books that never grow old and wells that never run dry, and such, if we are wise, we shall lay under tribute, that we may be the worthy sons of worthy sires.

'Now,' says the record, 'there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.' His ignorance and the fate which befell him in

consequence constitute a warning to us all. The older folk must be willing to teach and the younger willing to learn. All of us must be adequately equipped for the strenuous business of living and none is so equipped if the past is neglected or despised.

RODERICK BETHUNE.

The Babe in the Ark

Exod. ii. 3.—'When she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.'

THE Translators of the Authorized Version,' writes Mr H. V. Morton, 'have by the rendering of one word created a picture, very dear to the British heart, of the infant Moses cradled among the bulrushes; but, alas, this picture is not accurate. The child was placed in an ark formed of plaited papyrus reeds made watertight with a coating of bitumen. It was believed that this plant was a protection against crocodiles.

The "vessels of bulrushes" were the little rafts of papyrus reeds, the earliest form of craft used on the Nile, which were greatly admired by the Greeks in later times. Rafts similar to these are still used in the Sudan. Therefore we must imagine the young Moses cradled not among plants which suggest an English stream, but among the feathery greenness that edged the ancient Nile.'

1. Surely this old story of the Babe in the Ark carries its message still to all anxious-hearted parents who have set the little frail crafts of their children's lives on the great stream of the world. Such fragile little things they are, and such a dangerous adventure they are beginning, that we almost wonder as we look at them whether we were wise to take the risk of launching them amid such treacherous currents. We feel that we should like to hold them by us for ever lest disaster fall on them, as Sir Austin Feverel 'wished to be Providence to his son.' But alas! we cannot. There they are, launched forth as little independent beings, each with his own life-voyage ahead of him, which he must travel alone. None, not even his mother, can go with him. She can only

keep watch from far off to see what befalls, and interfere now and then to offer some help. The child is distinct and separate, a personality acting on its own will and fulfilling its own destiny. He may keep a straight course from the beginning, or he may sail upon rocks and quicksands and incur all manner of shocking catastrophes. His course is not within our determination. We use our utmost care to give him a fair start, and yet it is possible for his will to undo all our best provision and to contradict all our dearest purposes.

¶ Charlotte Brontë writes thus to her literary friend and adviser Mr W. S. Williams, a few days after the death of her brother Branwell, who passed away at the gloomy Haworth Parsonage, in September, 1848. 'It is not permitted us to grieve for him who is gone as others grieve for those they lose. The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his father's and his sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since manhood the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled; to experience despair at last, and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career. I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light.'

But that is not the whole of the story of human life and love. It would be foolish to minimize the danger; but it would be treason against God if we thought of the danger alone, and not also of the providence of His Spirit interweaving its rule amid the chances and changes of our life, and opening up the way of escape. No thoughtful and sensitive men and women would ever dare to bring children into this world unless they relied upon a fundamental belief that in spite of all, at the long last, through whatever evil misadventures, these children would win home to safety and joy; unless they believed that there was a Grace in the universe which stoops to help its children, as Pharaoh's daughter stooped to Moses, and will not leave them succourless.

¶ William Blake in his verses about *The Little Boy Lost and Found* preaches the Christian faith in that rescuing grace of God, into the care of which we commit our children:

The little boy lost in the lonely fén,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry; but God, ever nigh,
Appear'd like his father, in white.

He kissèd the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro' the lonely dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

2. It is precisely this trust that our religion establishes and our sacrament of baptism proclaims. The Christian sacrament of baptism embodies a glorious optimism. It says very frankly that life is a perilous business; that human nature, unless it is awakened to the love of God, is a dismal and perverse thing. We are, therefore, taking an overwhelming and unjustifiable risk in launching a child into the world unless we perceive that there are means, and make effort to secure the means, by which we can surround it by redeeming influences that will draw out its potential Divine Sonship. Those means exist. They exist in the Church, wherever the Church is approximately true to its own ideal. To surround a child with the atmosphere of godly love is the essential regenerative deed. But this is dramatized by the sacrament of baptism, in which we plant a child into the historic body of believers in a redeeming God—the Christian Ecclesia—regarded as the centre of operation of the regenerating agencies of God's love, the main conduit of the Holy Ghost. Here, in the Christian fellowship—exactly in so far as it is really Christian, exactly in so far as the faith in a Divine Grace is really operative—is the theatre of all those influences of divine love mediated through men which provide the regenerating environment for the world's children. Here, therefore, is the Ark in which a child setting out upon his life's adventure needs to be placed. It does not provide a magic charm against disaster. It does not determine a child's destiny against, or apart from, his own free choices. But it provides the saving environment in which right choices have the scale weighted in their favour.

3. And so this old story of the Babe in the Ark remains to picture a great truth of the gospel. Our children need not be launched helpless upon their dangerous earthly adventure. They are born to be kings, royally free and wealthy in all noble equipments. And such they shall become, if we do our part in providing opportunity for God's good grace to operate upon them. We are increasingly careful of their bodily welfare in our modern societies. With our health-visitors and our school clinics and many other agencies we are endeavouring to secure for them an adequate physical opportunity in life. But their adequate spiritual opportunity is given only as we succeed in immersing them in Christ, in surrounding them with all the gracious and holy influences that derive from Him.

Where the faith of the Church is absent, men, reflecting on the helplessness of childhood, are reduced to the desperate sadness of such words as these of Thomas Hardy's, when, in describing in his *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the string of young children in the feckless John Durbeyfield's family, he says: 'All these young souls were passengers in the Durbeyfield ship—entirely dependent on the judgment of the two Durbeyfield adults for their pleasures, their necessities, their health, even their existence. If the heads of the Durbeyfield household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half-dozen little captives under hatches compelled to sail with them—six helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield.' Later in the story, on the evening before the fatherless family is to be turned out of the old cottage home, Tess gathers the younger children about the fire, and they sing hymns they have learnt in Sunday school. The young voices move Tess to tears, and she turns away to the window to hide them. 'If she could only believe what the children were singing; if she were only sure, how different all would now be; how confidently she would leave them to Providence and their future kingdom. But to Tess, as to some few millions of others, there was ghastly satire in the poet's lines:

not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come.

To her and her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion, whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify, and at best could only palliate.'

The aching sadness of such words as these is inevitable except where a faith in Divine Love comes effectively to baptize children into a saving and happy environment. Without this, birth does indeed seem hapless and unjustifiable. But our gospel is that, if it seems so, it is because we are failing to mediate God's love to childhood. It is our fault, our own fault, our own most grievous fault. The Church exists to remedy such ghoulish circumstances, which the devilry of human carelessness brings about; and to make it clear to all that there is a fellowship of love waiting to receive all children and work upon them regeneratively. In a really Christian society, if the parents fail, the children are not left succourless: they are members of a body which recognizes responsibility for them and does its best to bring to bear upon them the rescuing grace of God. Hardy's grim words provide just the basis that is needed for a recognition of the utter necessity of baptizing children into a fellowship inspired by God's love, as the only tolerable condition upon which childhood should be allowed to enter the world at all. Such a fellowship is the only ark that can safely carry them through the waves of this perilous world. And that fellowship may and does exist wherever 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.'

Pharaoh's Daughter

Exod. ii. 5, 6.—'And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him.'

1. OUTSTANDING among the women who have influenced history is the daughter of Pharaoh who rescued Moses from the watery grave, and thus gave Israel a saviour, and humanity a lawgiver and guide. Who was this benefactress whose name even is omitted from Scripture?

If we are right in believing that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Merenptah, then his predecessor,

the oppressor of the Israelites, must have been the great Rameses II, whose victorious monuments cover the land of Egypt. He was gravely alarmed at the rapid increase of Israel in Egypt. Enslavement proved ineffective to diminish the numbers who toiled for Pharaoh. He therefore made a law as cruel as that of Herod, ordering the destruction of all male infants by drowning in the Nile. Here was a most remarkable and insidious device to destroy a nation and its religion. Egypt worshipped Sebek, the god of the Nile. The sacrifice of a child to Sebek was considered an honour, and one of the highest privileges conferred by the priestly cult. Thus we behold an attempt to substitute Sebek for Jehovah. Egypt would destroy the religion, as well as the male population of Israel, and thus endanger the very existence and soul of Hebrew nationality.

We cannot say, with certainty, how long that cruelty operated; neither do we know the number of Sebek's victims. But some scholars believe that when this Lady discovered Moses in the ark of bulrushes, she was a princess and heiress-apparent to the throne of Egypt, and that she grieved because Sebek, who was the god of fertility, had not, so far, granted her a child. Her ablutions were therefore forms of worship and petition. On that ever-memorable morning, she might have imagined that her requests for an heir were answered by the god, because, from the altar of sacrifice was borne to her this beautiful Hebrew babe.

'And, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him.' Could the scene have been drawn more perfectly in a whole page of words?

¶ Kipling has a beautiful touch in one of his Indian stories which reaches into the heart of all motherhood.

A young Indian mother, Ameera, with her husband and her baby Tota are on the house-top.

'What shall we call him among ourselves?' she asks the child's father who has him in his arms.

'Look! Art thou ever tired of looking? He carries thy very eyes. But the mouth—'

'Is thine, most dear. Who should know better than I?'

'Tis but a feeble mouth. Oh, so small! And yet it holds my heart between its lips.

Give him to me now. He has been too long away.'

'Nay, let him lie; he has not yet begun to cry.'

'When he cries thou wilt give him back—eh? What a man of mankind thou art, if he cried he were only the dearer to me.'¹

2. In the adoption of Moses we are in the presence of the love that gives in spite of all obstacles. This princess defied the public opinion of Egypt. Her maternal instinct proved more powerful than tradition, environment, and education. She had been taught to despise Israelites, and her House schemed and plotted to destroy all the male population of the Hebrews. There was hatred in the very air she breathed; Egypt detested all that belonged to her slaves. It takes a brave soul to defy public opinion; that way lies social ostracism, persecution and the cross. We cannot believe that this Lady was deceived by the innocent stratagem of Miriam and Jochebed. Her sympathy was aroused, and she connived at the sisterly scheme to recover the babe out of the jaws of Sebek, and from an Egyptian environment.

This princess actually adopts a racial enemy, a child whom her father had sworn to destroy, whom her nation regarded with a perfect hatred. It had become a question of national survival between Israel and Egypt. One had to go if the other would thrive. There was war to the death. And yet we see the leading Lady of Egypt going beyond creed, civilization, caste, and racial divisions, and adopting an Israelite!

Here was a Christian who knew not the name of Christ, one who lived the gospel before it had been preached. Can we not imagine the surprise of courtiers, the backbitings and scandals in the palace, and the jealousy and disgust of Egyptians when the princess proclaimed Moses heir to Pharaoh's throne, educated him in all the wisdom of Egypt, and poured the treasures of the Empire at his feet? It needs but little imagination to conjure up some of the tragedy and thrill of one of the most remarkable romances in the history of the world. Yet how little attention has been paid to this daughter of Pharaoh!

¶ If Rameses II was the Pharaoh during the childhood of Moses, and if Moses, as it is sup-

¹ Without Benefit of Clergy.

posed, was a young priest in the Temple of the Sun in Heliopolis, he must have walked many a time past that tall black stone on the Thames Embankment which we call Cleopatra's Needle.

It has nothing to do with Cleopatra. It was carved, centuries before that queen was born, to commemorate the greatness of Thothmes III. Later in history Rameses the Great, who may have been the father of the princess, performed a trick for which he was notorious: he tried to obliterate the name of his predecessor, and inserted his own instead.

So Cleopatra's Needle may have stood with others at the entrance to the great Temple of the Sun when Moses, as a young priest with shaven head, went daily to learn the wisdom of the Egyptians.¹

3. Of course, such devotion must pay the cost, and face the consequences of the love that gives. The princess found a cross in the ark of bulrushes on the Nile, and nobly did she carry it through life. It would be untrue to call this a case of unrequited love, or irresponsible devotion. We believe that Moses reciprocated the affection of the Egyptian princess. What man, in such a position, could fail in gratitude and regard for a benefactress who had done so much for him? Ingratitude is rightly condemned as the basest trait possible to man. Ahithophel, Judas, Macbeth, and the daughters of Lear are abhorred throughout the ages. Moses was too noble a character not to show his gratitude and love for the one who had mothered him, ennobled him, and lavished her treasure unstintingly upon him. But this was a case of gradual and unavoidable alienation, which caused grief unspeakable to both sides.

When did Moses forsake the temples of Egypt, and publicly accept the religion of Jehovah? What must it have meant for the princess to see her beloved turn his back upon her gods? Did she not reason with him? Beg of him to remain true to Sebek, and the worship of Egypt? Many parents know something of the pain and pang of seeing children forsake the church and religion of their ancestors.

Why did Moses leave the royal palace for good, and throw in his lot with that of slaves? How, and when, did he learn of his real parentage? 'He refused to be called the son of

Pharaoh's daughter.' We rightly dwell upon the heroism of Moses, his sacrifice and nobility in that refusal. He leaves a principedom for the lot of a slave; the riches of Egypt for the poverty and obscurity of the bottom dog. But behind all that there was the agony of a motherly heart. Her prayers and entreaties could not keep the boy at her side. 'He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.' Another nation claimed him; a hostile rabble of slaves won his affection and loyalty.

We know of no pyramid erected to the memory of this great Lady; but, wherever the Books of Moses are read, and the Sinaitic Law is known, and the civilization rooted in monotheism is lived, there is a memorial to the motherly love that gives all.

Social Conscience

Exod. ii. 12.—'And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.'

1. It is a dramatic situation which the story reveals—a boy brought up out of his natural sphere among the ruling race, discovering himself akin to the down-trodden, oppressed slave population. Drawn by training and education to the dominant Egyptians, drawn by sympathy and blood-tie to the lower race, he came to feel himself an alien in the palace of the Pharaoh, and had also to learn that he was an alien from his brethren according to the flesh. All that was best in Moses would plead for giving his life somehow in the service of his kinsfolk; but much that could not be called quite ignoble would pull him to the other side.

When at last he made the plunge which settled his future life, it was done undesignedly, and not even from the highest motives. It is a stage in the education of a great soul, and it is instructive to see how in the providence of God a servant of His was led through his very mistake to become worthy for the highest service. Tempted by the thought of a great career somewhere among the Egyptians, drawn by the mysterious bond of blood to the outcast Hebrews, he would be often in a mood to let his destiny be settled by a chance. The chance came when one day he spied an Egyptian

¹ H. V. Morton, *Women of the Bible*, 57.

smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren ; and in a moment the die was cast ; he took the Hebrew's side, and slew the oppressor. We see that this act was not done from the highest motives. At this time Moses could not be said to be religious except in some external way. It was not till afterwards in the desert that he came to know God, and give up heart and life to Him. It was an act of passion, in spite of its generosity in taking the weaker side—more of a youthful escapade with a touch of bravado in it than anything else. In the occasion chosen he was hurried into decision. Indeed it was not decision at all ; for we gather that he did not mean this to be the point of departure for his life.

The act was done with a certain circumspection, and a prudential regard for consequences, which shows that he meant meanwhile to live his old life in Pharaoh's palace, after having displayed his practical sympathy with the men of his own blood. 'He looked this way, and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.' In taking the step to which his deepest instincts prompted him there was a timidity, a hesitancy, which showed it to be not the result of principle. He was not sure of himself, and was not sure of duty, and not sure of what he meant to do afterwards, and so he wanted to be circumspect and not commit himself too much and too suddenly. If he had felt it to be the absolute imperative of duty, he would not have been so cautious about the secrecy of his act.

How different his demeanour was in after years, when he had completely submitted to God, and knew himself a whole-hearted servant of God ! When he bearded Pharaoh and all the wisdom and might of Egypt, there was no more hesitation, and no mixed motives, no looking this way and that way. He had learned what every great heart must learn, and does learn in the presence of imperious duty—that he must follow right whithersoever it may lead him, and whatever its consequences.

¶ There is a memorable account, towards the end of Sir Walter Scott's *Peveril of the Peak*, of an interview between Charles the Second and the Countess of Derby. The latter is anxious to obtain the king's aid for the persecuted Catholics, but Charles is afraid to show them favour. 'There is no steering the vessel in the

teeth of the tempest,' he says. 'We must run for the nearest haven, and happy if we can reach one.' 'This is cowardice, my liege,' replied the Countess. 'Call your noble friends around you, and make a stand like your royal father. There is but one right and one wrong—one honourable and forward course ; and all others which deviate are oblique and unworthy.'

The sin of Moses' act lay in the moral cowardice that would not accept the consequences of the act, and most of all in the unworthy motives which destroyed its moral virtue as absolute duty. For this he had to suffer the anger of Pharaoh, which was only to be expected, and also the suspicion of his brethren, who could not see that he did desire to identify himself with them in their sorrows. He had to know exile and the desert loneliness before his motives could be purged, and himself made a perfect instrument for the will of God.

It was natural, however, that Moses should at this time show caution and prudence in the difficult position in which he was placed. Prudence is often a good quality, and even fear of consequences is quite a legitimate motive of action, a motive, indeed, to which all our laws appeal to some extent ; but in itself prudence is not a moral quality. To act from a motive of fear is to take the virtue out of the act. To refrain from an act for the same motive of fear may be a good thing for the man and for the community, as when a burglar refrains from theft from fear of the policeman, but it is not a moral abstention. It does not become moral until it corresponds to an inward judgment of right.

2. When we seriously consider our own mind and conduct, we must be struck by the large place we give in all questions of right and wrong to considerations like those which marred Moses' act. How often we do things, and refrain from doing things, not because of any principle in ourselves, but merely because of some outside considerations, such as whether, when we look this way and that way, there should chance to be no man in sight. To many, duty is only what our fellow-men expect of us. We conform to the standard of the community. When we are freed from the restraints and the sanctions of our fellows we lose our bearings, and our conduct vacillates from one side to another. Some of us will do in a foreign country what we

would not dream of doing at home. But the root of duty is inward, conformity to a standard set up in a man's own soul, conformity to what we call conscience; and apart from that there is no such thing as pure morality.

At the same time, this is not to say that the social conscience of the community, to which most of us conform, is a thing of naught. It is one of the strongest means by which God educates us morally. We inherit that social conscience reflected in the opinion of our fellow-men. It represents the slowly-gathered gains of the past, which we try to formulate in legislation. But the man who thinks he performs the whole duty of man because he conforms his conduct rigidly to the legislation of his country has never grasped the first principles of what moral duty means. Legislation must always lag behind the keenest sense of duty which the developed conscience of individuals feels. Our code of law is not an ideal, but a working scheme, a limit below which we as a community would faint not fall. A man may even be forced to break law in the interests of a higher morality. You would not necessarily call a man *good* because he ruled his conduct so as to keep out of the clutches of the policeman.

¶ A prison may well be—as the inscription on the Old Edinburgh Tolbooth had it :

Sometimes a place of right,
Sometimes a place of wrong,
Sometimes a place of jades and thieves,
And honest men among.

To make our action moral we need a higher standard than any outside one, however pure that may be. If we are always at the mercy of the particular moral climatic conditions in which we happen for the time to be, if we cannot decide and act until we have looked this way and that way to make sure that it is safe or permissible, then we have abrogated the true function of moral life, and are false to our own highest manhood.

Our judgments and decisions must be made independently of fluctuating circumstances, if need be in opposition to the opinion and practice of the community. We must be ready to obey God rather than men, to listen to the still small voice of conscience rather than the loud call of the multitude, to respond to the dictates of duty, not to the fear of consequence.

¶ Sir Isaac Newton, having discovered the law of gravitation and written the *Principia*, ceased his absorption in scientific pursuits and in later years accepted appointment as Warden of the English Mint. His era was a time of almost universal political corruption, and one day Newton himself was approached by a man with a bribe of over £6000, a tidy sum in those days, asking for a personal favour. When Newton refused, the briber announced that he represented a duchess, a powerful figure in England, and this is what Sir Isaac Newton said : ' I desire you to tell the lady that if she was here herself and had made me this offer, I would have desired her to go out of my house ; and so I desire you, or you shall be turned out.' ¹

Nothing is so remarkable in the life of our Lord as His certitude of tread, the calm assurance with which He walked. There was no hesitancy about His moral judgments. He lived by an inward rule ; He walked by a heavenly light ; so His steps never faltered. It was ever the path of duty, simple, direct, and there was no look this way or that way, though the road led on to Calvary. If our hearts are fixed on God, if we give ourselves to follow Jesus, if we abide in Him, He will be our inward light, He will become our very conscience, enlightening it, educating it in the fuller apprehension of duty. We will not look this way or that way for the approval or dissuasion of men : we will look in the face of Jesus, and judge all things by what we see there, all ambition and desire, all motives, all conduct, all life, all duty. ' An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness ; wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein : the redeemed shall walk there.'

It is a plain path, after all, that way of life, that leadeth unto God.

Research and Reverence

Exod. iii. 3-6.—' I will now turn aside, and see this great sight . . . he was afraid to look upon God.'

1. It was only a scrubby thorn bush, but it was a ' great sight ' because the man who saw it was in a great mood. The God who condescends to make the human heart His throne, and to

¹ H. E. Fosdick.

dwelt with the humble and contrite spirit, pitches His tent beside wayside wells and flames in the brushwood undergrowth. To those who have eyes to see these things there is kindled a flame which goes not out, as Moses knew.

¶ The Quaker poet, Whittier, saw as sure a token of the Divine presence in the glow of a maple wood as in the burning bush :

And when the miracle of autumn came—

so he wrote of one who knew within himself what was meant by 'the soul's communion with the Eternal Mind' :

And all the woods with many-coloured flame
Of splendour, making summer's greenness tame,
Burned, unconsumed, a voice without a sound
Spoke to him from each kindled bush around,
And made the strange, new landscape holy
ground.

There are still such bushes in the desert, exuding a resinous substance which sometimes catches fire from the hot rays of the Eastern sun, and the highly inflammable material may burn without setting the tougher fibre of the bush itself alight. Moses, with the trained eye of a scientist who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, had his first opportunity of making acquaintance with a natural phenomenon which he had never had the chance of witnessing in the palace of the Pharaohs or in the laboratories of the magicians. But he had come from that high civilization with a keen and practised eye, and was at once intensely interested in, as he was immediately attracted by, a striking phenomenon of the countryside. There speaks the voice of the eager man of science as he beholds a spectacle which engages his attention : 'I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed.'

(1) The first thing we are told about this memorable experience is that Moses *used his eyes*. 'The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.' Well, we are not surprised that the Divine revelation should come to a scientist in that way. No doubt the angel of the Lord used to appear to that extraordinarily quick-witted and gifted older sister of his through her love of music. Miriam would have her exalted moments when she had her timbrel in her hand. For

Moses it was a phenomenon in Nature. 'And he looked.' That is the first step in acquiring knowledge. 'They looked unto him and were radiant,' as the Psalm says. But the look ever precedes the radiance. 'When they were awake they saw his glory.' The Mount of Transfiguration was merely a glorified couch until the disciples used their seeing eyes.

(2) The second thing that Moses did was to *turn aside for closer inspection* when once he had seen that which challenged his attention and held his interest. 'Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight.' Step by step does the open and inquiring mind and the pure and questing spirit go on to the knowledge of God. 'Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.' The only safety, whether for Christian pulpit or for scientific laboratory, is to keep following on where the way of discovery beckons. The only infallibility which Christ promised His Church was the infallible Spirit of truth, in the following of whom age after age with fearless, tireless persistence there would be comfort and security. 'He shall lead you into all truth.'

¶ 'A friend of mine,' writes Dr Mackintosh Mackay, 'was one day travelling with the late Mr Bonar Law and took out of his bag a book which he had just been reading. It was Sir Henry Jones's Gifford Lectures on *A Faith that Enquires*. He handed it to Bonar Law, remarking that it was worth reading. Bonar Law took it up and then said, "But is its title not a bit of a contradiction? Is it not the essence of faith that it never inquires?"'

There is something wrong with the faith that is either unwilling or afraid to turn aside to the impartial weighing of any piece of fresh evidence in Nature. It is God Himself who calls us to investigate His own wonderful works in Nature as in grace. 'The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that take pleasure therein.' It was the scientific spirit of research in Moses which brought him his wonderful reward. 'I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.' There speaks the true investigator. He does not say, I will turn aside and see if I can fit this into my system of theology. He did not know he was going to find another evidence of the presence of God. It was solely the interest of this botanical phenomenon that drew his attention at first. He had no more idea that he was going to have

a divine revelation than we have had when we have come to the reading of a new book, or an act of public worship, or any of the hundred ways which have promised little at the first glance, but which have in the end, before we were done with them, flamed with the very glory of God.

Softly I closed the book as in a dream
And let its echoes linger to redeem
Silence with its music, darkness with its gleam.

That day I worked no more. I could not bring
My hands to toil, my thoughts to trafficking.
A new light shone on every common thing.

Celestial glories flamed before my gaze.
That day I worked no more. But, to God's
praise,
I shall work better all my other days.¹

(3) And here is the kind of way in which *God rewards the spirit of fearless and painstaking inquiry*. 'When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush.' God never fails to reward painstaking and scientific and workmanlike research. So are the secrets of Nature discovered one by one; and the secrets of Nature are the ways of God.

¶ The French naturalist, Jean Henri Fabre, was once asked by a visitor, 'Do you believe in God?' To which the great scientist replied emphatically: 'I can't say I believe in God; I see Him. Without Him I understand nothing; without Him all is darkness. You could take my skin from me more easily than my faith in God.'

Some have never found God because they have simply never taken the trouble to turn aside to see Him. God is missed through laziness or indifference or unwillingness to understand, just as much as through secret sin or open wrong-doing. The spirit of honest investigation and conscientious research is ever rewarded by Him who implanted that spirit.

2. The truly scientific investigator is characterized no less by reverence than by the love of research. 'I will now turn aside, and see,' exclaimed Moses, with the insatiable thirst of the man who has sought truth all his life: and

¹ Winfred Ernest Garrison.

immediately after we are told that 'he was afraid to look upon God.' He was afraid to look. Afraid to look at the very thing which he had turned aside to see. He suddenly saw God in His works. The same voice that had called to him from the midst of the bush, challenging and whetting his curiosity, also bade him take off his shoes in reverent adoration. The great investigator is ever also the humble worshipper.

¶ It is related of Laplace, the famous astronomer, that he was once found on his knees by his telescope, and in reply to one who asked the reason of such an act, said, 'Overwhelmed in wonder at God's works, what else can I do? I am learning ever so feebly to think God's thoughts as He has written them in those stars.'

Without reverence we cannot reach the goal of research. There must be reverence for facts, reverence for one's self, reverence for one's work, and reverence for the Maker of all these things. And that is why we are told that Moses was afraid to look upon God, afraid to do the very thing he had set out to do. As Bacon wrote three hundred years ago: 'It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion.' There is a light-hearted way of speaking about the knowledge of God which is prevalent among us. It was exemplified some time ago in the declaration of an American novelist, who said of Jesus that he was sure they would get on well together. Well, that was certainly not the impression which the first disciples received when they met Him. They loved Him, they appreciated Him, their hearts went out to the charm of His manner and the winsomeness of His appeal. But they did not feel that they would 'get on well together.' On the contrary, Peter felt that he and the Man Christ Jesus would not get on well together. 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' was his agonized exclamation when he really understood who Jesus was, and what He could do for him. The more God has done for us, the keener should grow our sense of unworthiness. The fuller our net, the greater should be our humility. And it is always so with the truly great and discerning, with those whose spirits are sensitive and whose judgment is delicate. You can't 'get on well' with a consuming fire unless you have an abnormally thick skin—

and then it is only a question of time. It is only after you know Him as a Redeemer from sin, as Peter found Him to be, that you can 'get on well with Him.' That great declaration that He was the Light of the world is properly sandwiched in the Fourth Gospel between the story of sin in a woman and sin in a man. The closer we come to the bush, the nearer we advance to the secrets of life; the more knowledge grows, the deeper should reverence root. And so, if we have any appreciation of the nature of truth, and any apprehension of the character of Him with whom we have to do, we pray :

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.

The Release of Personality

Exod. iii. 4.—'God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.'

It is a great moment in any man's life when God becomes to him a living reality. The value to us of these outstanding figures and personalities of the Old Testament is in their individual discovery of and encounter with God. We see them one by one coming by various experiences to the perception of something new to them about God, as Newton found something new about the universe when gravitation dawned upon him; as Madame Curie found something new about matter when the gleam of radium caught, not so much her eye as her mind. These Old Testament people are not on one level, and what they have to tell us is not of one value. But each did in some way carry the human apprehension of God a little further, except one here and there who stands for a set-back and a cloud.

With this story of Moses it is not the fashion and time in which God invaded his life as a commanding reality, but what it did with the man himself, that we are to consider.

1. To begin with, we see that under a new consciousness of God, and of God dealing with and claiming him, a man gained for the first

time a right grip upon himself. These Bible biographies are frank, and not one of them more frank than this of Moses. We see him in his weakness as well as in his mastery. He is shown us as a man of uncommon capacities, but all of them uncontrolled, unorganized, and undisciplined. There is in him a capacity of fierce passion. He flew at a slave driver, killed him, and shoved his body under the sand. It may have been justifiable homicide, but the point is that it was passion unrelated to purpose, uncontrolled by principle. At the other extreme there is in him a brooding and crippling diffidence. This is so manifest and so perverse that God is represented as being made angry by the man's flaccid self-excusings.

How often in this chapter Moses says, 'Who am I?' He might well ask it. It was the first question he had to get answered. To underestimate the dignity and importance of himself is as disastrous for a man as to overestimate this, and here is a man for ever falling straight from the peril at one extreme into the peril at the other. 'Who am I?' We must hear how he found answer to this, his first, problem. Another personal pronoun fell on his ear. It was the 'I' of Almighty God. 'God said: I am that I am.' 'Certainly I will be with thee.' And at that the wavering inconstant 'I' of Moses, one moment conceited and the next abject, was lost in the one tremendous revealing moment when that 'I' of Almighty God sounded and resounded.

This is not musty history. Here is our most constant problem. We are disorganized personalities. We want some secret of self-organization as the first stage to self-mastery. To hear the voice of God say to our unquiet soul 'I am he that sent thee,' is to gain mental poise, moral security and serenity, spiritual purpose.

¶ Without the privilege of any personal intimacy with the late Lord Haldane, I was once for the space of some days able to observe him closely in the midst of a distracting ordeal when he was the victim of noisy and irrational injustice. I was impressed by his unbroken serenity and poise. It was clearly not indifference, and it was not defiance. It was an unruffled inward calm and self-possession. When his autobiography was published the remembrance of this impression came back vividly, and I thought that I might in these intimate pages come upon the secret. I think that I

found it in this passage. 'The belief that the more experience is spiritual the more it is real, has influenced me through the course of my life during more than fifty years. There is little that matters when the principle is grasped and held to, and hesitation and even happiness become replaced by a life that is tranquil because it is freed from dependence upon casual ups and downs. The real is the spiritual. All else is circumstance, trimmings, the dress of things.'¹

2. There is a second clear thing in this Hebrew leader's story. It is that under the consciousness of the reality and claim of God he became conscious of duty. Not until then had he a just conception of how his life took hold upon other lives, and was bound up with the destiny of his people, and with the long purposes of God with them.

Many a man has had this experience without having seen the bush that burns. There is the man who had a time in his life when he felt the injustice of the world, and when he was younger he flung himself at it with hot indignant energy. It cost him a good deal. It hindered some entirely legitimate purposes of his own. It left him in the end impressed with the littleness of his own power, and the impotence of any single effort. To-day he takes life as easily as he can, and though he pities the unfortunate, it is from a calculated distance. He still likes to hear about 'the enthusiasm of humanity,' and the phrase in his own mouth brings back a familiar taste. He, too, was once on fire. But it all burned out. In his time he has even stood over a dead Egyptian. But it did not save Israel.

¶ This waning of enthusiasm is portrayed in the words of Brand Whitlock, the American lawyer and author. Writing out of a wide experience of impossibilities and failure in the cause of social reform, he says: 'One changes as one grows older; one becomes a little more patient, perhaps a little wiser. And then, most of the reforms I used to advocate in my strenuous young days have been adopted. I don't know whether they have done any good or not, but they don't seem to have done very much harm. As to the new ones proposed, I am afraid that I am not quite advanced enough to favour them.'

¹ Thomas Yates.

Such a man is as Moses was on one side of the burning bush. There is a change on the other side of that bush. He has found God and, finding God, has found himself a man with duties and opportunities. Across the quiet sky under which he has placidly watched his flock, he now sees written, 'Let my people go.'

It looks as if God can do nothing for Israel until He has done something with Moses, the shepherd exile. This dialogue between a persuading God and a shrinking man is strangely impressive. Human history makes its recurrent comment upon this. The crowning comment is the fact of the Incarnation itself. It is by humanity that God redeems humanity. Every moment which has lifted man into a little more light and freedom has had God's sent man at the heart of it, and the answer to the question of the old Chartist hymn is that God will save the people—save them from war, exploitation, the destroying of secularism, and all through the sinister list—when He is able to find people through whom to save them.

¶ Thomas Carlyle complains concerning human sorrow that 'God does nothing.' Perhaps He is waiting for Thomas Carlyle, who does nothing. For nothing is more certain than the fact that every movement for the emancipation and uplifting of the human race has had a man at the heart of it, and that God does nothing without the co-operation of man. John Wesley's saying has been often quoted, that 'God buries His workmen but carries on His work.' It is true; only let it be realized that He carries it on by the hands of other workmen.¹

3. The final thing to be taken note of in this old story concerns the method of the revelation which so changes and charges a man. It is the commonness of the medium of revelation. Perhaps a gorse bush with the light of the evening sun on it. Many a man had seen it, and seen nothing. Moses had seen it, or its like, where there was no revelation for him in it. Then one day God shot through the commonplace. That is the way of God. Why did not Moses see as much as this long before he did? Why had he not seen it when he had his controversy with the Egyptian slave driver? Right was right then. Humanity was humanity then. The outrage on a nation was the same

¹ Charles Brown, *The Birth of a Nation*, 120.

then. Just as much principle and just as much righteousness were involved then as now. There was just one difference. Moses had not before been able to see that God was behind the whole human question. The bush without the flame was like abstract truth and principle without God in them. Here at last for him is Right ablaze with a Presence; Truth flaming with a Spirit. That truth burns for us of to-day not in a thicket of moorland, but in a Person. The truth about the 'I am' is Jesus Christ, who said: 'I am the light of the world.' That light kindles by every pathway. It shines dim or clear in every movement of the life of our time which has a cleansing saving intent. By it we discern the measure of good, the temper and motive of duty, the way through our problems of society, of the right government of our State and our world, of sane relations between the peoples of earth. Consider Jesus! Through Him come the behests of the living God to our living souls and living times, and through Him they invade the listening and willing spirits of men.

The God of Different Personalities

Exod. iii. 6.—'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

1. THESE three men, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, stand as types of character in all ages of Israel. Abraham is the type of all men of faith—those who adventure their souls after God. Isaac is the type of men who adventure nothing—whose religion is quiet, meditative, almost timorous. Jacob is the type of men of double nature: crafty and pious, worldly and devout. And the text tells us that *God is the God of all these types of human nature*. He has no favourites: He is as much the God of the uninteresting Isaac as of the double-dealing Jacob; as much the God of the double-dealing Jacob as of the far nobler, more heroic Abraham.

(1) *Abraham*.—All of us are included in one or other of these three types. Abraham, the 'Father of the faithful,' is the representative of all who in every age have had a faith in God strong enough to drive them forth from the religion of their fathers in search of a purer religion. Now, God is the God of all such men.

Much of the present rebellion against the faith of our fathers is quite unworthy of respect. Nevertheless, this rebellion against tradition sometimes springs from a Divine inspiration. And if that is true of any of us, then Abraham's God is our God. He responds to that trust which ventures out life itself upon Him. There is absolutely no possibility that His guidance will fail at last. Often, like Abraham, we shall be in doubt—often the Divine promise of hope in our heart will be disappointed; but sooner or later the God of Abraham will lead us, as He led him, to ends and issues diviner far than anything of which we now dream.

(2) *Isaac*.—But God is not the God only of the adventuring. He is the God of Isaac as well—of quiet, uninteresting, commonplace men and women. And in truth this is well for most of us. For most of us live quiet, uneventful lives, drifting along the customary ways, with little that is original or adventurous in our composition:

For I was ever commonplace,
Of genius never had a trace.
My thoughts the world have never fed,
Mere echoes of the book last read.

Yet, however uninteresting we may seem, God has an interest in us. He is the God of ordinary and commonplace men and women who have no history. He has His own dealings with Isaac—His own course and methods of special education for him as surely as for his father and his son. There is not one of us overlooked by God—not one wholly commonplace in the eyes of the Eternal.

¶ It is said that Abraham Lincoln was once called in question about a friendship he kept up with a certain man. 'He is such a common man,' was the critic's comment, 'I wonder you can endure him.' Lincoln's reply was memorable. 'I sometimes think,' he said, 'that God must like common people. He made so many of them.'

(3) *Jacob*.—And now we turn to Jacob, and find ourselves face to face with another personality. He is two men: worldly and unworldly—dishonest and pious—crafty and devout. In short, he is the type of multitudes in all ages. Is God the God of such men? Many are indignant at the favour shown to Jacob in Scripture, almost shocked that God should have

anything to do with a man so treacherous. They dismiss as hypocrites our modern Jacobs—members of the Church who are also men of the world. Fortunately, God does not dismiss them. He has no love of worldliness, or craftiness, or treachery, any more than we have; nevertheless, just because Jacob needs Him so badly, He becomes Jacob's God. He passes such men through many a painful struggle with their own sins, if by any means out of the wily Jacob He may create the diviner Israel. There are few Scriptural phrases for which most of us have greater reason to be profoundly thankful than this—'the God of Jacob': the God who does not turn away in contempt even from men of double nature; but who will do His best for them, bearing long with the duplicity which He hates, that He may in the end cast it out.

2. And, further, God is *a different God to these three types*. Of course, He never changes in Himself: yet He seems to change with our changes. A man of one temperament thinks of God in one way: a man of another temperament in another. Similarly, experience of life gives its own bias to our thought of God. Hence no two men worship precisely the same God.

Take Isaac's conception of God. When Jacob was pursued by Laban he objected that Laban would have sent him away empty-handed, 'except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me'; and again, to ratify the agreement come to between them, he 'swore by the fear of his father Isaac.' To Isaac, then, God was a Fear—so much so, that He was called 'the fear of Isaac.'

¶ Says Dr Thomas Yates, 'I remember preaching a sermon on the text, "Isaac went into the fields to meditate at eventide," and portraying a very quiet, placid man seeking untroubled communion with a God he knew and trusted, an Old Testament contemplative and mystic. That was bad psychology. I forgot that his name for God was "The Fear," and if he went out in the evening light of the fields to meditate with *that* in his mind, he was no happy mystic losing himself in the sense of the near and dear Presence of God, but a haunted and uneasy and timid man. His God was not a God whose symbol is the Light. The symbol

of God for him was the falling dark with its unseen, unanticipated, sinister possibilities.

Contrast this fear with Abraham's conception: 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' This idea of God sprang out of his character and circumstances. A wanderer in a land of which he possessed not so much as a foot, called to defend his kindred from the lawless kings of the country, he grew to feel his great need of a shield in the midst of constant danger: and God said, 'Fear not: I am thy shield.' Further, God had promised him a land and a great posterity: yet neither land was given nor son born to him. And in reply to his natural disappointment God says: 'I am thy exceeding great reward.' How different is all this from Isaac's Fear—God no terror threatening his life, but a protecting shield: his exceeding great reward, more to be desired than any of His promises!

The thought of God changes once more with Jacob. True, his conception seems to change from form to form; but perhaps his most characteristic name for God is 'the Rock of Israel.' It is a name which fits in with Jacob's own temperament. In spite of his duplicity there was in this man a certain tenacity of purpose which could not be turned aside—a rock-like firmness which could not be shaken, which made him perhaps more fitted to serve God's purpose than the easy-going Esau. And he came to recognize the same firmness in God. Against that Rock he dashed his life in vain wrestling to have his own way, and gave in only when the sinew of his thigh shrank. And then the Rock against which he broke himself became the firm foundation of his life.

3. And, further, God had *three different modes of educating these men*, according to their nature and their need. Abraham's faith was purified by many disappointments. But this school of disappointment would have been disastrous to Isaac, incapable of the Divine unrest of Abraham. Hence God gave him what training he was capable of receiving through his family life: not all of it happy, as we see from the rivalries of his son. Still, it is there, in the quiet round of home-life, that, as a general rule, quiet natures receive a great part of their spiritual education. All this is changed when we turn to Jacob. Undoubtedly he had disappointments, like Abraham, and family

training, like Isaac; but his chief school was that of his own sins. He wrestles with his own craftiness, his own worldliness, in the darkness of the night by the brook Jabbok. It is his own strength, his trust in his own cunning, that gives way when the sinew of his thigh shrank. God gave Jacob that great education which changed him into Israel in the school of his own sins. It is a painful school; yet the only one for men of Jacob's character. The only thing that would rouse a man like Jacob was just to feel his own sins closing in round his life, his duplicity entangling him like a net, and to be made to understand that there was no way of cutting through the entanglement save that of straightforwardness and honesty—becoming a new man, worthy of his new name of Israel.

The idea underlying all this is the individuality of God's dealings with every human soul. He does not deal with us in crowds and batches. He is the God of high seekers after truth like Abraham; He is no less the God of commonplace men like Isaac, and intriguers like Jacob. To each type of nature and character He gives that personal, individual training which it needs. And out of that training He gives to each a separate, individual revelation of Himself. And, however hard it is to believe this, yet be sure it is true of all men. Never read the words, 'I am the God of Abraham . . . of Isaac . . . and of Jacob' without remembering, first, that God treated these three according to their separate individualities, their distinct nature and needs; and second, that so in all ages He treats all human souls, and our souls with the rest.

The God whose Name is 'I Will Be'

Exod. iii. 14.—'And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.'

In a certain university where a group of men were discussing religion, one member professed himself opposed to Christianity because it presupposes a static universe. 'The God of the Bible,' he said, referring to this passage, 'is an unprogressive Deity, who announces Himself as "I am that I am." He speaks and it is done; He establishes the world and it stands fast for

ever. The world as we know it is not that sort of world. Everything is undergoing change. We look back over a marvellous evolution of plants and creatures in response to altering conditions of climate and upon the emergence of new forms of life—fishes developing into reptiles, and reptiles into birds and mammals. The history of our own race is a kaleidoscopic narrative of races and nations in ceaseless flux, of the adaptation of institutions, of the modification of customs, of the readjustment of beliefs. Whatever we know of our world assures us that it is not static, that nothing in sky or sea or land stands fast for ever. The God of Biblical faith who calls himself "I am" is out of keeping with the facts of the universe. And further,' he continued, 'the religious ideal of "a safe life" in fellowship with a God who remains the same yesterday and to-day and for ever, strikes me as a tame affair. It encourages believers to "settle down." That is why Church folks are so conventional and ethically so uncreative. They worship the God of things as they have been, and believe that He is the God of things as they shall be world without end. The future contains no risks for them. If they work hard, as some of them do, to achieve what they call "God's will," they have no doubt but that He guarantees the success of the enterprise. And within a few years they expect to be in a heaven where everything and everybody is at once perfect, and there is nothing more to worry over for ever and ever.'

1. To obtain a rehearing for Biblical religion with any who share this view, it is well to begin by calling attention to the fact that the consensus of scholarship translates the words in this story of Moses' religious experience, not 'I am that I am,' but 'I will be that I will be.' The text should read: 'And God said unto Moses, I will be that I will be: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel I will be hath sent me unto you.' This suggests anything but a tame experience for men in companionship with Him. And, as a matter of fact, believers who have tried to keep company with the God of the Bible have certainly not had unadventurous careers. Take this Moses from his precarious babyhood in an ark of bulrushes in the Nile through his upbringing by a princess at Pharaoh's court, his gallant intervention on behalf of an abused fellow-Israelite,

his flight into the wilderness where he kept himself alive by being a herdsman, his chequered subsequent career as a leader of a revolt and emigration of slaves, and their guide through a long march over the desert, up to his death on a mountaintop, with wistful hopes for the future of a nation which he had started on the ways of freedom—one would scarcely call that a tame life.

Again, does not the conception of God in the properly translated text, 'I will be that I will be' fit in with the facts of an evolving world? Think back to that epoch, millions of years ago, when our earth was just cooling off, and lowly forms of life were emerging, vegetable and animal hardly distinguishable from each other. In both there was a latent capacity for developing powers to link themselves with forces outside themselves and grow. Plants built up the pigment known as chlorophyll, and connected themselves with sunlight; creatures developed red-blood corpuscles and combined themselves with the breath of life in oxygen. The most far-sighted prophet could not have foretold the myriad colours and shapes that trees and shrubs and flowers would assume, nor the advances from a tiny animalcule to birds and beasts and human beings. There was resident in adaptability and responsive life a potency which was saying: 'I will be that I will be.'

¶ Professor J. Arthur Thomson writes: Our studies indicate for mankind a mundane future which is irradiated with hope. This hope is grounded on the fact that evolution in the past has been on the whole progressive, towards integration, towards increasing fullness, freedom, and fitness of life. There has been 'a constant if chequered advance.' Will it stop?

Man's highest conception, his conception of God, must enlarge as his thoughts are widened; but it is surely interesting that the modern idea of a God—a God of evolution—brings us back to the God of our fathers, whose name—the scholars tell us—meant not 'I am that I am,' but 'I will be that I will be.'¹

Or picture primitive man in his early cave-dwelling days. Anthropologists tell us that the earliest traces of human existence contain evidences of religion, of man's sense of Beings above himself with whom he can establish connection and be reinforced. Doubtless his spiritual reinforcements would seem to us crude

—reinforcements of courage to cope with wild beasts, of endurance to stand the cold of that glacial epoch, of fidelity to his clan. But through these beginnings of spiritual life, can we not hear a whisper: 'I will be that I will be?'

Or stand, many, many centuries later, with this fugitive keeping Jethro's flock at the back of the wilderness near Horeb, and seeing a bush lit up with flaming light, and hearing in his soul this mysterious Voice, bidding him become the liberator of his enslaved people. Through Moses' awakened conscience, with his ideals of freedom and justice—ideals narrowly limited to freedom for his own tribesmen and a law for their life, regardless of the condition of other folk—can we not hear a prophecy of the moral development of mankind, a development by no means complete as yet, and the very Conscience of the universe saying: 'I will be that I will be?'

Or come down the centuries and enter a meeting of the followers of the crucified Prophet of Nazareth. They are listening to a letter which speaks of Him as 'the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.' One of their prophets speaks of Him as the Alpha and the Omega. Ah, progress has stopped at last. The last word has been said. But no! they are speaking of Jesus as the bright and morning Star, and their prayers are fervent utterances of hope: 'Even so come, Lord Jesus.' The God whom they worship through Him, they address as 'The Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.'

¶ When the Church came to consecrate time under the calendar of the Christian Year, she set aside the season before Christmas as Advent—the further coming of Him who had revealed Himself in Jesus. Clement in the second century wrote of Him: 'He has turned our sunsets into sunrises.' The New Testament ends in the Apocalypse and its vision of the City of God with an echo of this word to Moses: 'I will be that I will be.'

2. 'I will be'—that is the significant Biblical designation for the unseen Lord of life. The name suggests adventure. This does not mean that religion is a mere leap in the dark. 'I am' does not disappear from this striking narrative. The mysterious Presence who speaks with Moses links Himself with the past—'I am the God of thy fathers'—and Moses' hallowed

¹ *The Control of Life*, 270.

childhood memories are aroused to recall the family tradition of the unseen Companion. And more: 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Religion comes to us not only as a family inheritance, but also as a racial experience. Three different types of men—Abraham the pioneer, Isaac the peaceful follower in his father's footsteps, Jacob the wily self-seeker, wrestled with and transformed—three different types attest what they discovered the Invisible could mean to them. God always comes to us saying 'I am,' and pointing to His record. He has unveiled Himself in men's careers. Do we not naturally associate God with those who have seemed to us in fellowship with Him? Is He not to us the God of our parents, or the God of some respected teacher, or the God of a devout friend? To all Christians He is for ever the God and Father of Jesus Christ—the God He trusted and whose faithfulness to Him in life and death and until now made and makes possible His saving power. Religion is never a blind venture; it is a venture upon the testimony of those to whom God has proved most real.

But the element in religion stressed to Moses was not this witness of the past, but the as-yet-unexplored riches in God. 'I will be that I will be.' Every fresh set of circumstances in Moses' career would unveil something more in his unseen Helper, until with vast hopes for the future of his people he is laid to rest on the summit of Pisgah.

(1) Think what that name must have meant to Moses for his own career! Despite the hazards of his infancy as the son of slave parents, he had been a child of fortune with a princely upbringing. If in a moment of impulse he had committed himself to the cause of his oppressed people, now in the calm second thoughts of the wilderness he was reconsidering the situation, and no wonder that he shrank from assuming the leadership of a horde of slaves. Can we blame him? It was a thankless task to wake a nation made small-minded by years of monotonous hard labour. He must expect criticism from his own people and fierce opposition from the Egyptians with whose supply of labour he was interfering. Had he foreseen all his troubles at Pharaoh's court, at the Red Sea, through years of wilderness tramping, he would never have undertaken his

mission. As it was, he saw enough not to want to start. But that name for God, 'I will be,' rang in his conscience. The static life for him was the life with God barred out. He might settle down as Jethro's son-in-law, and leave his people to groan at their brick-making. The venture was to trust the prompting of conscience and the faithfulness of that invisible 'I will be.'

He who emancipates is in for all manner of discouragements. The Israelites did not thank Moses for getting them out of Egypt. Only after he was safely buried on Nebo did they call him Israel's foremost citizen. Idealists who attempt to improve human relations in a business enterprise or an educational institution, or who try to alter political conditions or to lead a church into ampler faith and more inclusive fellowship, have all the adventures of a Moses before them. And the chances are that, like him, they will die this side of the promised land and perhaps without his Pisgah outlook. The alternatives are a static life in the grooves into which the world shoves us, or obedience to the Voice which bids 'Go' and adds, 'I will be.' Those only who bear Him company in enterprises beyond their capacities discover surpluses given as emergencies demand them, and in those surpluses a Self-giving God.

¶ One of his friends writes of T. E. Lawrence: 'I think of him as another such as Moses. He, too, was called to lead a nomad people, composed of many tribes, through almost the identical wilderness. He, also, had his leadership gradually thrust upon him, and on various occasions he would be oppressed by the weight of his responsibilities, and his sense of his own inability, but, like Moses, circumstances always compelled him to carry on, because there was no one else. Finally, like Moses, he himself was never allowed to see the full realization of his dreams.'

(2) And as for a static heaven, we must admit that at times Christians, wearied by the strain of earth, have so pictured it. In the Upper Church at Assisi, Paradise is represented at the top of one of the frescoes by five arm-chairs against a blue background. And even where physical repose has not been emphasized, intellectual rest has been promised in a land of light where nothing remains hidden or obscure. The British physicist of the seventeenth century, Robert Boyle, is said to have feared death only

because after it he would know all things, and no longer have the delight of making discoveries.

But such views are caricatures of the Christian hope as we find it in the New Testament and as we find a basis for it in our present Christian experience. Take death itself, and who that has stood beside the dying is unimpressed with its mystery—the spirit going forth on an unfamiliar way, finding for itself some new instrument for its expression as this body is left behind, and parting with every companion save Him who bears the strange name, I will be that I will be! On the tomb of Albrecht Dürer we read a single word in Latin: *Emigravit*—the artist is off to a new sphere. And in the realm where ‘I will be’ reigns more fully than here, what possibilities await artistic souls, exploring and creative spirits!

(3) Further, is it not plain that every spiritual advance discloses a new horizon? Every problem solved suggests questions previously not thought of; every acquisition of power at once opens up new uses for it. Through the long record of earth’s evolution every goal has proved a point of departure. If the City of God be an inclusive commonwealth into which the glory of the nations is brought, who dares predict on what enterprises the children of light will embark, and what employment will be given the courage, the patience, the faith, the devotion, the manifold skills, in which earth has trained them? A static existence is unthinkable for a future where the spirit of Him who ventured Calvary rules. The heaven of our Christian hopes is a vast community energized by inventive love—the love which devised and brought to pass the Cross. Whether we are thinking of life here or within the veil, the man whose God bears the Name, ‘I will be that I will be,’ may say to himself the lines with which Walt Whitman concludes his *Passage to India*:

Sail forth, steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee and
thou with me.

For we are bound where mariner has not yet
dared to go.

And we will risk the ship, ourselves, and all.

O my brave soul!

O farther, farther sail!

O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the
seas of God?

O farther, farther sail!

Entire Consecration

Exod. iv. 2.—‘What is that in thine hand?’

1. HERE in the desert, to a man whose ways have been providentially overruled, to whom life’s disappointments and failures have already been transformed into effective discipline, comes the crowning, culminating consciousness of God in the blazing bush. The self-communion which he had experienced; the hopelessness of the situation in Egypt, upon which he had long brooded; the conclusion to which he had doubtless come, of contented acceptance of the simple comforts and joys of the shepherd life, were all forgotten in the sudden and unexpected revelation of God, for which, all unconsciously to himself, God had been preparing him. At the consciousness that this revelation of God means for him a high adventure of service for God in Egypt, Moses is dismayed. He knows his insufficiency; he fears the consequences to himself; and doubtless he fears still more the miscarriage of the Divine plan through his unfitness. So he tries to get out of it. To steady him, God gives to him unprecedented assurances. He says to Moses, ‘I will be with thee,’ ‘I will stretch out mine hand,’ ‘I am that I am.’ But Moses, the hesitant, the self-conscious man, is still undetermined and still reluctant. Then God comes still closer to him and says, ‘What is that in thine hand?’ And He follows the query with a convincing demonstration of power. The staff, the sign of Moses’ pastoral calling, which was in his hand, becomes a serpent, and the serpent again becomes a rod. The entire incident is possibly God’s concession to Moses’ weak faith, giving him a visible assurance of the invisible support and alliance He has already guaranteed. More certainly it is an essential part of his preparation for all that his commission must involve. If he is going to do service for God in Egypt, and lead that people out into the service of God and to the land of promise, he must be supported by impregnable confidence that he is in actual fellowship with an entirely adequate and constantly present God. So God gives to him this extraordinary demonstration of His power.

It is in this respect that this incident means most to us. For there are few men and women who have come to realize that the Christian

life means Christian service, that to be in and of the Kingdom of God means life-long engagement in its tasks, who do not stand appalled at the quite ludicrous disproportion between the challenge made to them on the one hand, and the inadequate measure of their resources on the other; even though God has said to them, 'I am,' and even though they know in their hearts they cannot deny Him. We see in Moses a very accurate and convincing picture of ourselves brought face to face with God and His claims, the world and its needs.

(1) Notice how God proceeds to enlighten Moses as to the possibility that is enfolded in what he already has; how He goes on to convince him that what he is able to bring to Him is quite enough if it be truly yielded; how He proceeds to quicken his obedience into immediate activity by a display of what He can do with the ordinary equipment of an ordinary man. 'What is that in thine hand?' A shepherd's staff, the badge and implement of his shepherd duty. It is a symbol of his life and of its moral content, of the character that has been developed in the quiet of the desert during those long years. It stands for the product of his desert occupation. There was nothing in it, or in the experience it stood for, to give any competence for the task which God is indicating to him of leading men out of Egypt's bondage into the glorious freedom of His will. And yet God wants that shepherd's staff and all that it represents; God wants that weak thing to confound the mighty; God wants that thing of negligible value to use it as His own sceptre, to break down Pharaoh's opposition, to beat down the gates of brass and the walls of iron, and to lead forth His people. 'What is that in thine hand?' Upon the surrender of it by Moses the entire design and plan of God depends for its accomplishment.

(2) Notice, further, that by changing the rod into a serpent God shows to him that there are sinister possibilities hidden within his personality, only awaiting the critical occasion to break out, like a serpent, into defiling activity. There are sleeping sympathies with evil in his nature, and, serpent-like, these are ready to be aroused into destructive vivacity. That is what God means when He shows to him that the staff in his hand is convertible into a serpent. For if a man is to do the will of God in Egypt, he must first learn how utterly insufficient he

is in himself and in the offering which he brings to his God. That is not all. By its retransformation from a serpent back into a rod, on the obedience of faith—and it requires some faith to take a wriggling, biting serpent by the tail—God showed to Moses that there is power for the conquest of all these threatening, malevolent treacheries within himself. God shows him that life can be subdued and altered under His direction. 'And the serpent became a rod again in his hand.' Why does God teach him this? For this reason: that if a man is to do the will of God in Egypt, he must have, first, the assurance that it can be done and is being done in his own life; that there is a Power stronger than self, with all its unreliabilities and uncertainties, with all its secret, unsuspected sympathies with evil. God must convince a man that He can and does conquer his tendencies and so cancel his misgivings. For when a man knows within himself that God, in Jesus Christ, has conquered evil in the realm of his own nature, he has wonderful confidence in going out to tell others what He can do. When a man is, in his own life, demonstrating the truth he declares, nothing can stand before his testimony and his service.

(3) Moses learned in this transaction the great lesson that all that his staff stood for was henceforth no longer his own. From that time on he is a man under authority, qualified to carry out whatever God indicates, since the power and the plan are equally His. As for himself, Moses is not unaware of the inevitable difficulties and almost certain consequences to himself of service in Egypt. He knows what conflict with Pharaoh will surely mean; what contest with the stubborn and supine will of the long-enslaved Israelites will involve. But he is in the hand of God; he is himself the rod of God. For it is very interesting to notice, in the twentieth verse of this chapter, that at the close of this reconstructive colloquy with God, Moses sets out for Egypt, and it is recorded that he took with him, not his rod but 'the rod of God'! That rod which had been changed into a serpent, and is now a rod again in his hand, is not his rod any more—it is 'the rod of God.' That is how he looks upon it; and it surely speaks of his whole life as being an instrument yielded to God for His service.

2. God is saying to us, as He said to Moses,

'What is that in thine hand? There is the world, in which I need thy service; there is the world-field, in which I need men and women for the deliverance of those upon whom My love is set. What is that in thine hand?' The question is a rebuke to those who think that men of outstanding gifts, of obvious distinction of mind, are the only useful weapons of God among men. It is always a mistake to imagine that we could serve God more usefully if we were only possessed of the equipment of somebody else, or favoured by their advantages. No man is ever more useful in Christian service than any other man with equally sincere obedience. No man is ever less useful if he is sincere in his service for Jesus Christ than any other man. It is not what the world thinks, nor the value it sets upon men, nor prominence, that give any value to service. What gives value to service is the fact that life is the rod of God, and that the man himself is moved by holy impulses to obey his Lord at all cost. Therefore, what seem to us limitations are never to be regarded as disqualifications.

Every man has in his hand, and every woman in hers, what is convertible into the rod of God. What does it amount to? Nothing much. Only very moderate ability, only insignificant gifts, only a very ordinary and commonplace personality, only a small capacity, only the product of a very restricted, provincial life. *What* it is matters very little. *Whose* it is matters everything.

¶ On one occasion, when a crowded audience had assembled to hear Paganini play, the great violinist, to the dismay of those who had paid big prices for their seats, deliberately broke all the strings of his instrument save one; and then triumphantly holding up the violin before the people, cried, 'One string and Paganini!'

¶ What is that in thine hand, the voice asked John Bunyan in Bedford gaol. A quill pen. There was no vast store of learning behind it—only the King's English and a spiritual heart. But, pen in hand, he spun his dreams and gave us *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

What is that in thine hand? the voice asked two brothers in a back street of Birmingham. And they looked at a poor hut that held a cocoa-making machine, and they thought of the dwindling business their father had left them. One was for giving up and starting afresh in another land. The other sought the

help of God, dedicated the business to his Lord, began anew with prayer, organized the business on Christian lines, looked after the welfare of the workpeople, and set a new example of Christian principle in industry.

'What is that in thine hand?' Do not be deterred from handing it back to God because it is so little. What we have is what the Lord wants. What we are He has made us—and for this hour. 'What is that in thine hand?' And the Lord would have us make response, 'It is Thine own, Lord. It has been redeemed by Thee. It belongs to Thee. Here it is, Lord, take it. Here am I, Lord, take me.'

Vital Living

Exod. iv. 10.—'And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.'

1. WHY should Moses have thought that one interview with God would give him facility of speech? 'O Lord,' he says, 'I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' As if meeting God would give one words! Meeting God enjoins silence! St John understood that, for when God's glory smote upon the faces of the heavenly host, he says, 'There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour.' Simon Peter felt it when the power of Jesus overwhelmed him, for he cried, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' The Psalmody is the most beautiful collection of devotional literature in the world, and the Psalmist constantly speaks of 'waiting' upon God. Even that sweet singer, the later Isaiah, whose words are like lyrics, learned in silence that 'they that *wait* upon the Lord renew their strength, and mount up with wings like eagles.'

Moses was merely naïve and inexperienced when he expected to feel a rush of words upon his meeting with God. He learned afterwards, if as yet he did not know, that only silence is appropriate for the Presence. Speech will come when, with God behind him, he stands confronting the people. Words will come to him, then, like a mighty river in their volume, every drop having been cooled with the snows of the height,

and warmed in its passage through his own heart. Men who are silent before God are of compelling power before men.

2. It is said in the old story that, in the face of the reluctance of Moses, the Lord offered to substitute the natural eloquence of Aaron for the heartfelt speech of Moses. Moses was apparently willing that this delegation should take place. As if there can ever be this transference from one personality to another without loss of power. Here modesty reaches the point of craven surrender. To separate speech from personality is to separate soul from body. Only one's own speech is worthy to fashion one's own thought. Aaron may be more facile in speech, but Aaron is not Moses, and cannot speak the words of Moses without dissipating much of their virtue.

But for one thing one would question the essential inspiration of this story at the point where God is made to propose that 'Aaron shall be as a mouth unto Moses, while Moses shall be to him as God.' It is 'that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses,' because of this stubborn, mulish self-distrust. Surely the Creator has a right to be angry when the vessel He has chosen and fashioned disappoints its workmanship and is unable to bear the red wine of His purpose. There could never have been a more pernicious travesty of the truth than to suppose that God can be pleased by the voluntary denial of the gifts He has been pleased to bestow. There is a false humility which almost boasts of its incompetence, as though God wanted nothing so much from men as cringing dependence. Were we not taught to sing :

Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and emptied vessel,
For the Master's use made meet.

Broken vessels never were meet for use ; emptiness is only a condition which precedes usefulness. The exquisitely chased cup, filled with the rich red wine of stimulating personality, is surely the only vessel which is meet for honour in the great house of the Master. There is probably more evil wrought in this world, or at least less good done, by reason of a false modesty than by an overweening conceit. Many a conceited person is made sane by life's stern lessons ;

we learn our limitations by wholesome defeat. But how can the craven modesty which never tries be taught that it could have succeeded ? Therefore it is better to try and fail than to escape failure by never trying. Every man who has never tried to reach his best has failed to fulfil the purpose of his creation.

¶ Says G. K. Chesterton, 'The crimes of the Devil who thinks himself of immeasurable value are as nothing to the crimes of the Devil who thinks himself of no value.'

3. Moses, as is clear from the record, was afraid because he clearly visualized three strong opposing forces.

(1) He feared *Pharaoh*, or vested interests. There never yet was a good thing that needed to be done but there was somebody whose interest it was to prevent it. Why should it be expected that Pharaoh would let these unpaid labourers go ? If you have been living a bad life, and now want to live a good one, depend upon it there are those who will think you are causing them inconvenience. You will be disturbing their plans or goading their consciences, and they will oppose you. There are people who want ignorance to remain, there are those who do not relish plans for the improvement of social conditions and the advancement of the poor. They will speak you plausible reasons, or they will work against you in silence. You ought not to quail but rather rejoice when you feel the thrust of their opposition. Like Moses, if you stand against them endued with divine grace, you may find that you need not fear them, for they will fear you. The custodians of privilege are always timid folk.

(2) Moses was conscious also of *the apathy of the people*. 'They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice.' This apathy on the part of those who need freedom is more difficult to contend with than the opposition of those who would prevent it. It is the ignorant who do not want enlightenment ; it is the unclean who do not want cleanliness ; it is the immoral who hate morality. But if you be sufficiently charged with vitality, you can make inroads upon their apathy. You owe it to yourself to try. You owe it to the purpose of the Creator, who can only improve the world through such as you.

(3) Moses was also *conscious of his own weakness*, as well he had need to be. 'I am not

eloquent,' he said. He was conscious of something that stirred in his soul, but doubted his ability to give it expression. Do not let us think of eloquence as something that belongs to the tongue only. There is an eloquence of silence and an eloquence of deed that are sometimes more compelling than eloquence of speech.

Surely nobody has lived vitally who has not gathered out of life at least some sure convictions, and has not found some way of making them to be known and felt by others. If there are those among us who have never known what it was to oppose vested interests or to fling their burning convictions in the face of apathy, or to have dreaded personal incompetence until we had conquered it by devotion to the task, we may be sure we are only living upon a fraction of our potentialities and are disappointing the Divine purpose.

The humility is not justified which remembers only its deficiencies and sighs with Moses, 'O Lord, I am not'—but rather that which, with Paul, is not self-sufficient but remembers its resources and cries, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.'

¶ What a dynamic power D. L. Moody was! There was a 'plus' man indeed! Dr Dale once said of him that although he had no wish to be unkind, he could not help remarking that when he looked at Moody as an individual, and then thought of the magnitude of his achievements as an evangelist, he could see no manner of relation between the one and the other. You couldn't explain what he did by what he was. You could only explain Moody on the ground that he was in touch with supernatural power, linked on to infinite resources, filled to overflowing with the resistless energy of God.¹

Overlooking Our Best Helpers

Exod. iv. 14.—'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee.'

MOSES was hesitating. Not that he was backward or timid, but he realized his limitations, as a small man seldom does. He felt unequal to this urgent, new task of rousing the Israelites against the King of Egypt. He knew he was not fluent; he had no gift of oratory, no power to sway a

crowd, and he was well aware that this would be required to stir any enthusiasm in the people. 'I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue,' he reflected; 'I've no command of words. Like Cromwell, Moses was deficient in the power of kindling people by words to act and strike, as a leader ought to do in a crisis.'

Now this is a story of encouragement, and the encouragement is a reminder that he was not to be alone in the business; God would supply others to stand by him and reinforce his efforts. What about Aaron? Moses for the moment had forgotten his own family. Miriam his sister had a gift of song, and Aaron had the gift of eloquence. *He* at any rate is a speaker. 'And, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee.' Already he was on his way to join his brother.

1. Moses had overlooked the gift of God which lay in his brother's life. He was like the prophet Elijah, who cried, 'I, even I only, am left'; there's not a soul left in the country to care for true religion except myself—only to be reminded by God, 'I have left me seven thousand in Israel, who have not bowed to Baal.' It is the temptation and the weakness of those who do see something that requires to be done, but who imagine that they are the only people alive to the issue. Every one else seems indifferent. And yet the truth is that once we start forward ourselves to do our duty, we discover helpers and sympathisers often in quarters where we never expected to find any response. If there is a good work to be done, it is wonderful how many come to help us, ready to co-operate with us, although we did not look for much or for anything from them. The God who has moved our heart, we may be sure, will be moving others also.

¶ 'The one clear glory of our time,' says Professor J. W. Scott in *The Hibbert Journal*, 'is the existence all around us of a great white army of men of good-will, who are ready for anything and are only waiting to be told what to do.'

• ¶ Francesca Alexander has a poem in which she tells of a hermit who dwelt in a cave among the mountains. He fasted and prayed, and endeavoured by every means in his power to purge his soul of all evil and adorn it with spiritual beauty. He fancied that he alone cared about such things; and as, from his cave, he sometimes saw at night the twinkling lights of the cottages about the pine-clad valleys, he

¹ Ian Macpherson, *This Man Loved Me*, 101.

wept that the people dwelling in them had no love for higher things. One day, however, he was commanded to set out on a journey among the towns and hamlets round about him. All sorts of unlikely people were moved to open their hearts to him. He was astonished at the world's wealth of hidden goodness. He returned to his cave, and, of an evening, found a new delight in contemplating the valley that lay below. He thought, as he

... saw the twinkling star-like glow
Of light, in the cottage windows far—
How many God's hidden servants are! ¹

2. Sometimes God has such gifts for us in our own circle which we carelessly overlook. Probably Moses did not look for very much from his own family. He may have been seeking supporters or stimulus for the cause outside his immediate environment. For it is one temptation of living together that we soon make up our minds about our kinsfolk. Familiarity dulls our sense of what they may do; we live so near to them that we sometimes see less in them than outsiders do, till actually we underrate their capacities. There is certainly an unreal tone in what is said by some about family relations. A man may justly plead that he finds so little in common between himself and his relatives that, were they not his relatives, he would not choose to associate intimately with them.* Why should he be expected to value them highly, simply because they are born in his family circle? True, but that does not cover all the facts, for we are also slow to see very much remarkable or promising in some of our best relatives, whose capacities and qualities are recognised first by outsiders. We may disparage them unduly. A French historian, speaking of Joan of Arc in her early hours of uncertainty, observes that 'it behoved her to find in the bosom of her family some one who would believe in her; this was the most difficult thing of all.'

Of course there are families where it is just the opposite, families so wrapped up in themselves that, to the amusement of outsiders, they have an exaggerated idea of any member's abilities; they've a queer, clannish pride in those who bear their name, and any one who happens to belong to the family is on that account exalted. But more often, as Jesus once put it, 'a prophet

¹ F. W. Boreham, *Wisp of Wildfire*, 205.

is not without honour, save among his own kin and in his own house.' Why? Because they think they have taken his measure. So it was with Aaron. Evidently Moses never dreamed that his older brother would be interested in the cause. And yet he was. At that very moment he was on his way to join forces with the leader. 'Is not Aaron thy brother? And, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee,' with a spontaneous offer of assistance in the emergency.

¶ In the tale of Homer we are told how, during a crisis of the war against Troy, the Greek leader was so worried and anxious that he summoned the other chiefs to confer upon the situation. But, the poet adds, Agamemnon's brother needed no call. 'Menelaus came to him unbidden for he knew in his heart how his brother was burdened.'

3. There are, it is true, some things in life which we must face alone. In the discipline of making a decision, for instance, upon some important move in life, the time comes when friends and counsellors cannot help us any further; we have to go forward and make up our minds by ourselves. Duty, again, is in the last resort an individual affair, for, whilst light may be thrown upon it by public opinion or by some qualified adviser, in the end it is for us to see what our duty is and to undertake it—for us, in the first instance, without stopping to wonder whether we may possibly have to do it unaided. In such moments there is a loneliness which has to be faced. Hugh Miller, in his autobiography, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, wishes that we had in literature some authentic Confessions of a Leader. His point is, such a book would reveal the fact that a leader has often to engage in some enterprise against his better judgment; he is led by his followers now and then; there are cases 'in which, though he seems to overbear, he is in reality overborne, and actually follows, though he appears to lead.' But a leader's confessions would also reveal two experiences. One would be loneliness; for any one who has to lead his fellows is repeatedly obliged to rely upon his own counsel and to trust his individual judgment rather than to accept suggestions profusely offered by his colleagues. The other experience would be that of being tempted, like Moses, to wonder whether he could count upon any support at all in undertaking some urgent venture, or even to imagine that his personal

capacities were the sole resource of God. This latter temptation besets many in quite undistinguished forms of service and opportunity. And the safe line to take is to be convinced that, once we tackle the job, allies will be forthcoming. One of the rallying truths in our life of action and affection is that we find ourselves endowed by God not only with some personal insight into fresh duty but with a measure of succour and support from our fellows, even in certain cases from people whom we were shortsighted enough to overlook at first.

Private and personal encouragements of God are in store, no doubt, for any one who starts forward to obey Him. But what encouragement is like that of companionship? In the loyalty of those who stand by us, who come forward to rally us and to take part in the good work, it is God giving Himself to us through the support thus furnished by a kindred spirit. 'Friends reach out their hands and prefer us'; yes, Donne adds, 'but Thy hand supports that hand that supports us.' 'Is not Aaron thy brother? And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee.' How an experience like that invigorates us! How it doubles our power! When such aid meets us, we feel ashamed of having underrated men and women within our circle, and we step ahead with renewed zeal. We say, as we are joined by our ally,

I am resolved that thou shalt learn
To trust my strength as I trust thine;
I am resolved our souls shall burn
With equal, steady, mingling shine;
Part of the field is conquered now,
Our lives in the same channel flow,
Along the selfsame line.

The Sanctuary of Life

Exod. v. 17.—'But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.'

THE children of Israel were becoming mere beasts of burden, sullen, soulless, despairing. The curse of slavery, even in its lightest forms, has been that the higher possibilities of human nature have been excluded; and in its vilest form men have become brutes. The Israelites in their days of bondage were losing all that

made them distinctive, losing all the moral and spiritual traces of their ancestry. Their taskmasters were grinding the soul out of them. They were treated as an inferior race, and so were becoming inferior. Being beasts of burden, they were not supposed to need any provision for the higher instincts of their nature, the consolations of religion, the strength of worship, the hope of their own peculiar faith.

Moses saw, as a wise statesman, if nothing else, that his people would lose everything worth having unless their religion could be saved to them. He knew that it was only that which kept them from the low level to which all other slaves sank. He felt that life needed a sanctuary to make it true life. He asked from Pharaoh some relaxation of the tight bonds which held them to their sordid existence. 'Let us go three days' journey into the desert, we pray thee, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God.' The King of Egypt said unto them, 'Why do ye, Moses and Aaron, loose the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens.' As a punishment for presuming to think that slaves had souls like their masters he added to the burdens, and commanded, 'Let there more work be laid upon the men that they may labour therein.' And when the cry of the oppressed came to the King, he declared that it was all an excuse to get off work, 'Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.'

It is the natural philosophy of the slave-driver. It would mean three days' less work done, and would be a dangerous if not also a useless pampering of the workers. The talk of religion is only an excuse for idleness, and shirking their tasks. From such a point of view it was natural to find a godless disregard for human life, or at least a disregard for the highest functions of manhood. We find the same reasoning, not only in the slave-driver, Egyptian or otherwise, but in all who hold the slave-driver's philosophy. The root of it is that the material is everything and the spiritual is nothing; and Pharaoh's reasoning comes perhaps natural to as many men in our day as ever before. Our age is so severely and intensely practical, that many have little patience with anything which is not suffused with the same spirit. The rapid advance of natural science has done much to give us this standpoint. The keenest and finest brains have been directed to scientific investigations.

We have been dazzled by the wonderful discoveries which enable us to use material forces. Science takes the place in the estimation of men which formerly philosophy held. It is natural that our ideals of life should have become more materialistic. Then along with the advance of science, and as a consequence of it, there has been as great an advance of industry. Machinery is more important in modern conditions of manufacture than the labour which directs it. Everything has its market value; even a quality of brain can be classified according to the wages it can demand. A material invention for saving labour is of much more moment than any amount of abstract thought. We are becoming slaves to the practical.

¶ An oriental writer, Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, lays this charge at the doors of our Western civilization: 'You call your thousand material devices "labour-saving machinery," yet you are forever "busy." With the multiplying of your machinery you grow increasingly fatigued, anxious, nervous, dissatisfied. Whatever you have, you want more; and wherever you are, you want to go somewhere else. You have a machine to dig the raw material for you, a machine to manufacture it, a machine to transport it, a machine to sweep and dust, one to carry messages, one to write, one to talk, one to play at the theatre, one to sew . . . and a hundred others to do a hundred other things for you, and still you are the most nervously busy man in the world. . . . Your devices are neither time-saving nor soul-saving machinery. They are so many sharp spurs which urge you on to invent more machinery and to do more business.'

There are many virtues in the eager, practical utilitarian spirit of our age, and it carries much hope for all of us in its bosom, hope for an ultimate social condition juster than any hitherto reached; but this need not blind us to the dangers and faults of our prevailing type of life. We have to learn that the world will not be saved by machinery and electrical appliances; that these can be developed to an undreamt of degree and yet leave man essentially where he is, lower indeed in the scale of life instead of higher. We have to learn that the end of civilization is not money, but men, and that the true wealth of nations is more than having our ships in every sea and our commerce in every market. We have to learn the limitations of our common standards and to see that what sometimes passes

for idleness is the truest work, and the busiest practicality is often, from the standpoint of eternity, the idlest trifling. Life needs a sanctuary to save it from perishing of cold.

1. *The Church.*—In religion the principle of Pharaoh is common enough, by which we judge of movements and churches by the vulgar standards of what is visible to the eye. It is so easy to make much of mere machinery in church work, to give a church its place in our classified scale according to the outward signs—members on the roll, the state of its finances, the organizations and committees and activities, forgetting the very thing that makes it an ally of the Kingdom of Heaven, which cometh not with observation. The essential function of the Church is not social, or political, or practical as we count practical. It will have a bearing on all these things, will influence society, politics, and practical life; but its essential function is that of *worship*.

The Church stands as an eternal protest against the shallow surface life which is ever in danger of withering away because it has no root. It is a constant protest against the idea that the culture of the devotional is idleness. It stands as the sanctuary of the race, for the weary and the heavy-laden, and all the beaten, broken lives of men. And it tells the strong and the victors in the fight, that away from God their strength is spent for nought, and their victories are empty and barren of good.

¶ R. L. Stevenson tells us that he stood glowering at the monks in the quietness of their retreat with a hot anger in his heart against such miserable skulkers, as he felt they were. Come out of that, his heart cried to them scornfully, and do a man's part towards keeping this great earth of ours spinning round and round! For the life of devotion looked to him a sheer waste of time, an obvious fatuity.¹

This need which the Church supplies is more than a graceful addition to life; it is a necessity for true life at all. Our activities cannot keep themselves up: even our religious and social activities cannot keep themselves alive. They must be fed by blood from the pulsing heart of faith. To learn truly to be active to good purpose, we must go back to the sanctuary of life, and gain that inner sense of things which keeps us from confusion from the outward whirl.

¹ A. J. Gossip, *The Galilean Accent*, 177.

We must gather the soul again at the centre, and root ourselves in the larger life of God.

2. *Prayer*.—This is the argument for prayer. It is not idleness, whatever the Pharaohs may say. It restores the fevered life; cuts it off from its sordidness and worldliness, and gives it back again its youth renewed like the eagle's. It rests the soul, as sleep rests the body. Pharaoh's charge rebounds upon the accuser. It is the other way about. It is easier to be busied with little activities than to face up to the serious tasks of culture. Men miss culture of mind because they are idle, because busyboddiness is really easier. And men miss culture of soul because they are too idle to make use of the means. You have to give yourself to prayer and meditation before the rebellious heart is curbed. You have to submit to discipline before the will is conformed to God's will and the life is clothed with the garment of holiness. The retort is often legitimate—Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, We have no time and no inclination to go and do sacrifice to the Lord.

3. *The Sunday*.—This is the argument for the true use of the Sunday. It is the slave-driver's philosophy and the slave-driver's interest to make Sunday as every other day, to call it idleness, and to seek if they could to lash men back to their burdens. 'Why do ye, Moses and Aaron, loose the people from their works? Get you to your burdens!' ¹

In this age even more than in the past there is a grave need for all of us of opportunities to give our souls a chance. Much of the nerve-strain or restlessness of to-day is fundamentally due to spiritual starvation. Repressed religion is at least as bad for man as the other more advertised repressions. Our need is not alone for bodily rest and recreation, but for opportunity to repossess our spirits and get the springs of our beings deepened and cleansed, to remind ourselves of the high issues of life, to restore our sense of the true values of things, to bow in adoration before the Source of all that is beautiful, true and good. ²

¶ Emerson asked a young woman working in his household if she had been to church that day. She answered brusquely, 'No, I don't trouble the church much.' He said quietly,

¹ Hugh Black, *According to My Gospel*, 193.

² Hugh Martin, *Morality on Trial*, 101.

'Then you have somewhere a little chapel of your own'—a courteous assumption which might have made her think.

Dulled Ears

Exod. vi. 9.—'And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.'

1. MOSES had come on God's errand to his people, and the message which he brought might have seemed particularly attractive and welcome. To slaves it promised liberty, to landless men it spoke of a country which should be their own, and people humbled and abased were recalled by it to a tradition made glorious by the Divine faithfulness. It looks as if this could not fail to touch them somewhere, and yet it did; for in any proclamation of good tidings, not only the message and the messenger must be considered, but the condition of those who are to hear. It was not for nothing that these men had laboured under the intolerable glare of an Egyptian sun, yoked like dumb beasts to the car on which some vast sphinx or obelisk was dragged across the desert to its place. The heart had been beaten out of them; the habit of cowering under the lash infects the spirit, and men, long treated like beasts, become like them. The nobler aspirations fail; people grow too tired for thought, and the far-off Divinity, who allows such things to happen under His dominion, seems quite beyond the reach of prayer. So it is written, 'They hearkened not.'

To different minds the life of a city presents itself in almost infinite variety. Charles Lamb grows lyric in praise of it: 'the lighted shops, the innumerable coaches and waggons, all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the watchmen and the drunken scenes, life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street, the crowds, the very dirt and mud . . . all these things work into my mind and feed me.' That is the city as many young people see it, who are captivated by the spectacle, to which they go out, and from which they come home to quiet and order; but one doubts if the men and women who are simply members of the crowd

find the dirt and mud and the drunken scenes very 'feeding.' They have to spend their life in the midst of noise; at work there is the roar and rattle of machinery, and on holiday there is the packed excursion train or the clamour of a football match. They seldom read and their talk is not enlarging. There may be nothing positively vicious in it, and yet it tells upon the mind, diminishing and impoverishing it, so that it becomes less able to receive the glories of the truth as it is in Jesus. 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,' they might say, 'it is high, I cannot attain unto it.'

¶ 'There is a worse waste of life than killing a man in battle,' says Ruskin. 'The whistling bullets have brought pleasant messages to many a man—orders of sweet release, and leave to go where he will be most welcome and most happy. . . . But if you put him to base labour, if you bind his thoughts, and blind his eyes, and blunt his hopes, and steal his joys . . . you have done all that in you lay to make the walls of his grave everlasting.'

There are men and women to whom we speak who simply are not able to hearken to the message for 'the oppression of their spirit and the cruel bondage.' Think how some of them occupy their lives. A boy is born into a crowded house; his father is a shiftless day-labourer, and his mother goes out washing, and drinks. When she is at work, the children do as best they can, and when she is at home her baby goes with her to the public-house. In such a home there is scarcely a pretence of authority, and there is no example set of self-respect. On the streets the boy learns what he can, finding his heroes there and his moral standards. He never thinks of settling to a trade, but probably turns to casual labour. If you speak to the man, you discover what is worse than ignorance and stronger than evil habit; his mind itself has been stunted. All the great formative ideas of self-respect, and self-control, of duty and love and obedience have been neglected; and appeals which, as you fancy, ought to find him where he is do actually go past him altogether.

Nothing is more amazing than the stubborn persistence of good in unlikely places; just as a curious, half-romantic affection ties some people to the court or district where their life began, so stray touches of nobility are preserved, a sense of honour in particular relations, and impulses of piety. But every worker of experience

would confess that the best results in slum districts are secured amongst the recent comers, and that there is a class which is almost inaccessible. Men and women are kept from listening to the gospel by the very conditions which make that gospel essential. Jesus said, 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick,' for it is not angels whom He came to help, but sinful and burdened folk. In the confidence of His redemption we are ready to cry, Oh, that Jesus would come, for then all difficulties would disperse! He would reinforce the weak will, and encourage the poorest creature to try again. He would bring self-respect and new ideals—cleanness to the home, and honesty in all relations, and discipline for the children. His is the word to meet the situation; yet it is rejected. It might make the Master weep over the city once more, 'If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.'

2. What are we to do then? Our first business must be, like Ezekiel in the valley, to 'prophesy to the bones.' The work of Christ in any form can never be less than supernatural work, and any influence is dangerous which tends to give the supernatural resources a secondary place. Men are not made all of one piece; there are strange gaps and inconsistencies of nature, and the most desperate of creatures may still have points of contact with the Redeemer of men. Jesus Himself spoke without hesitation even to the worst on the supposition that they would be interested in what He said. As He had come to seek the lost, He looked into all faces, and watched for openings and invitations in men's talk. Often He was disappointed and turned sadly away, but often He rejoiced because in the unlikely places He had found what He was seeking. His word is full of life and resurrection.

But we must not imagine that our duty is discharged when the gospel message has been spoken, for in Jesus the word was in flesh—a word with hands and feet. Into all His assurances and encouragements He put *Himself*, so that outcast women grew brave to try because they knew that He would help them through. That is the secret of successful work amongst the outcast. We must stand by the weak creature, reinforcing his courage and hope with our own,

and thus we may become to him visible embodiments of the goodwill of God. Sometimes before men know at all what goodness is, they have strange impulses of return of heart. These come and they may pass; but it is a gift which God grants to faithful servants to lay hold of such decisive moments, and then patiently to continue—helping, encouraging, educating the undeveloped soul.

¶ You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the tabernacle if you do not pity Jesus in the slum. . . . Go out into the highways and hedges, and look for Jesus in the ragged and the naked, in the oppressed and the sweated, in those who have lost hope, and in those who are struggling to make good. Look for Jesus in them; and, when you have found Him, gird yourself with His towel of fellowship and wash His feet in the person of His brethren.¹

Christ's servants should be ready frankly to confess that their debt to the gospel calls for much more than preaching. Stevenson was entirely right in his reading of Christ's word, when he taught his Samoan boys that if 'it is good to visit those in prison, it is surely better to keep them out of prison'; and there are services of preservation and education which Christ asks for, as they strike at the mischief before it is fully grown. The ministry of the teachers in day schools is, at its best, one of the healing and reconciling things in our bad districts; and that not only because of the positive conveyance of Bible truth (though that is priceless) but because of the establishing of conceptions of truth, patience, kindness, self-control.

There are demands pressing upon Christian men to-day which are not, in so many words, in Christ's teaching at all; and yet they are implied in His conception of the meaning and the end of human life. He who wills the end wills the means; and if we cannot get Christ's gospel fully preached or understood because of certain outward conditions, then it becomes an evangelical duty to discover ways of transforming these conditions. We may not all be able to save a man or change his life; but it is possible often to save a bit of a man, to diminish the force of a single temptation, to awaken some healthy interest, to raise his thoughts even a little, and thus, it may be, to prepare in him the way of the Lord.

¹ Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar.

Here, while the tide of conquest rolls
Against the distant golden shore,
The starved and stunted human souls
Are with us more and more.

Vain is your science, vain your art,
Your triumphs and your glories vain
To feed the hunger of their heart
And famine of their brain.

Your savage deserts howling near,
Your wastes of ignorance, vice, and shame,
Is there no room for victories here,
No field for meeds of fame?¹

The Banquet of Liberty

Exod. xii. 26.—'What mean ye by this service?'

THE Passover was an impressive festival which would intrigue the young mind, and children would ask questions as to the why and wherefore of this celebration. 'What mean ye by this service?' they would say, and the parents would answer: 'This is the banquet of liberty, which commemorates God's decisive blow for our freedom and tells how the destroyer, which slew the firstborn in every Egyptian household, passed over Israel and spared them to exult in the Divine liberator who had broken the evil spell of oppression.'

The Lord's Supper harks back to the Upper Room where our Lord partook of a meal which was related to the Passover, and He deepened and fulfilled the motif of the Passover as the festival of freedom. He meant His friends at table to understand that the destructive terror would pass over, and that every evil thrall which held them down and every wicked bond which galled their spirit with a sense of humiliation and helplessness would be broken. What Jesus and His disciples celebrated in the Upper Room was a new future prepared by Divine love for believing hearts and assuring them that they would be freed from all enslavements.

Our Lord took bread and broke it as a sign that His body would be broken in crucifixion, and an announcement of what it would cost in blood and tears to liberate people from their evil servitude. He gave the broken bread to His friends as proof that His death was voluntary,

¹ William Watson.

and was not a cruel fate thrust upon Him but a free offering of Himself. Then Jesus took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.' Thus God's kingly love enters into a solemn engagement with weak, erring folk. It is God's oath of allegiance with us and of our allegiance with God, by which we pledge ourselves to one another. Observe also that the old Covenant was made in an age whose outlook did not reach beyond the grave, but the new Covenant envisaged a timeless troth between God and man and promised everlasting life. Thus the Communion Service invites us to partake of God's saving love which frees us from the fear of life and the fear of death, and delivers us from the dread of the past, the dread of the present, and the dread of the future.

1. We are offered *Release from Accusing Memories*. Nothing is more oppressive than unforgiven sin. Ever and anon our conscience rattles the chain to let us hear that we are in bondage to some unlovely thing which we try to hide even from ourselves. It is a sickening enslavement. But the Divine Host welcomes us as His guests and holds out the cup of forgiveness. 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission of sins.' Here is the offer of release from accusing memories, and it makes the Lord's Supper the banquet of liberty.

So long as our sins are unrepented, unconfessed, and unforgiven, they remain in our life as a blinding, disabling force. They taint all our personal contacts. As Tennyson said of such, 'A little grain of conscience made him sour.' To be the captive of his own sinful secrecy embitters a man, and makes him a difficult person to live with, and his moroseness isolates him. But, more than that, the unforgiven sin puts people in a wrong attitude to God. Just as a boy, who has slipped into evil, drops his eyes or averts his gaze in his father's company, so an impenitent man feels sullen and resentful towards God. The psalmist cried, 'Mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I cannot look up.' Any guilty secret is a destroyer of insight and confidence in the Father and distorts our view of His love. We drift away from reality till we have owned up to the sin and been pardoned. Get rid of that hidden evil, that unforgiven sin, which has blurred your higher perceptions and is taking the heart out of

you, and lay it bare before Divine love with perfect trust. If Jesus stinted not in His love and suffering to release you from accusing memories how can you refuse or hesitate to open your hearts to Him and tell Him the whole sorry story of your sinning? To experience the forgiveness of sins is to feel the liberating touch of God as a sweet relief and benediction, and to go free, to make a fresh start with a new spirit and a new hope, a new power and a new opportunity. 'O taste and see how gracious the Lord is.'

I may go back across the years long vanished,
I may resume my childhood, Lord, in Thee,
When in the shadow of Thy cross are banished
All other shadows that encompass me.

2. We are offered *Release from Moral Ineffectiveness*. The Divine Host extends the hospitality of His Table to all who have been captured by wrong values and feel they have been dragged down to a life which is impotent, slavish, futile. Struggle as they will at times, they cannot get free. They feel themselves weighed down, manacled by besetting sins, and come to accept them as inevitable.

¶ Lawrence Sterne tells in *The Sentimental Journey* how he arrived in Paris without his passport and was told by the hotel-keeper that he might be shut up in the Bastille, but he laughed off the alarming idea of imprisonment till he passed through the courtyard and heard a voice like that of a child crying 'I can't get out! I can't get out!' Looking up, Sterne saw a starling in a cage, and in pity tried to open the cage door, but in vain. 'Alas, poor creature; I cannot set thee free!' 'No,' answered the starling, 'I can't get out! I can't get out!' Then only did Sterne realize the grimness of being confined in the Bastille.

But the glorious surprise which should stir and thrill our hearts at the Communion Service is that we can be freed from our chains and our humbling bondage. The destroyer has passed over and is gone, and God has struck a decisive blow for our liberation in Jesus Christ and His Cross. He has maimed the power of evil so that it can no longer command us, and He communicates His triumph to us, through the bread and wine, which symbolize His victory. Let these symbols speak to us of the overthrow of every evil thralldom, and of the moral recovery and emancipation given to us in Christ.

If only we appropriate the salvation offered, if only we take Jesus Christ as the supreme liberator, we shall have release from all moral and spiritual ineffectiveness ; nothing is surer.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free.

3. We are offered *Release from the Fear of Death.*

Our Lord said to His friends at Supper, 'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' Our Lord thus opened up an immortal vista to liberate 'those who, through fear of death, are all their life subject to bondage.' The philosopher Kant had such an abhorrence of sickness and death that he refused to visit his friends when they were ill or even to speak of them once they had died. This is morbid. Jesus has freed us from the oppressive dread that the grave is the end of the sweet, human ties that bind us together. If we believe in the survival of human personality, it follows that those tender, intimate relations which have produced our personality and made us ourselves must also survive. The Master gave the future life a social content and described it as a fellowship, a communion of hearts round the Father in His Kingdom.

Doth not death fright you ?

Who would be afraid on't,
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In the other world ? ¹

The Lord's Supper is the banquet of liberty, which frees us from fear and certifies that God's love is so loyal that the best is yet to be for believing hearts. There is fulfilment in the assembly of the friends of Jesus beyond death.

All glories that we lose or we forego,
One day shall find us, this I surely know.

'I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom,' and the core of this forecast is that God is a Father who will gather His sons and daughters round Him in immortal life, and that the rendezvous for this

¹ John Webster.

gathering, the chosen point, where the living and the dead meet, and hearts unite here and hereafter is Jesus Christ Himself. He is the rallying centre between the seen and the unseen.

'What mean ye by this service ?' We mean that it so symbolizes God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ as to offer us release from accusing memories, from moral ineffectiveness and from the fear of death and to be the banquet of liberty. The destroyer has passed over, and the future is ours as the free men and free women of the Lord. 'Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner,' and at this feast the Divine grace can set us free from a heartbreaking bondage, and plant our feet on the road to the land of promise where our highest dreams will come true.

God's Long Way Round

Exod. xiii. 17, 18.—'God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near . . . but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea' (R.V.).

THE situation suggested in the text is a very dramatic one. The children of Israel have come out of Egypt, first of all tempted out by the promise of the land promised to their fathers, and then carried out with signal triumph. If at any time they might have courage and faith and high hope, it was surely then when difficulties faded before them, when they felt themselves called and protected and guided by God. Feeling must have run deep and strong, and confidence must have burnt in every heart and lighted every eye. They would only ask to be taken straight by the shortest way to the destined goal. They would fear no dangers and no difficulties. It was the fit and proper thing also to complete the work so gloriously begun. The triumph of the deliverance from Egypt was partial and meaningless by itself. Its natural conclusion was the further triumph of the conquest. As the crow flies it was no long journey to the confines of the Promised Land. A short and rapid march, a brief and fierce struggle, and they might accomplish the conquest. That would be the thought in the mind of all in the flush of the early enthusiasm. It was certainly not to die in the wilderness that any of them left Egypt.

From the Delta of the Nile a few days' march through the sands will bring an army of invaders right into the heart of Palestine. This short and direct course would naturally be the one chosen by an ordinary military expert. There must always have been trade routes, almost as well marked as a modern road, between Egypt and Gaza. In all invasions from the south Gaza was invariably the first point struck on the way to Syria, just as in any invasion of Egypt from the north Gaza was the key of the position. With his usual military instinct Napoleon, after his conquest of Egypt, made straight for it as the natural approach to Asia Minor; and similarly Alexander the Great saw it to be an indispensable strategic point in his advance on Egypt from the north. With Palestine as an objective a general would seem shut up to the one course, and a leader like Moses must have known that in giving up this course he was, humanly speaking, giving up the chance of achieving their great design, or postponing it indefinitely—as indeed they actually did. Why this strange detour through the untracked desert? 'It came to pass that when Pharaoh had let the people go that God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near . . . but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea.'

1. We can see two evident reasons why in the good providence of God the near way was not chosen, and why the discipline of the desert was needed, however hard it must have been even for the most faithful.

The first is plainly mentioned in the text, namely, that the escaped slaves could not bear the sudden danger and fierce struggle inevitable in the near way. They were turned aside to the long way round through the *forethought of love*. 'God led them not by the way of the Philistines, though that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.' That short and near way was the way of certain danger and fierce struggle. Both Alexander and Napoleon had to fight their best at Gaza. That near way to Syria was the great battlefield of the ancient world, just because it was the key of the position between Egypt and the great Asiatic empires. Given empires in Egypt and in the Euphrates valley or Syria, there in the way of the Philis-

tines was always the shut door that had to be opened from whatever side the invasion came. To take the released slaves of Egypt there would be to take sheep to the slaughter. It would take the heart out of them quicker than the desert could. The near way would be the short way to the end of the great design. The discipline of disappointment by the way round about was the providence of love. The enlightened reflection of pious hearts in Israel afterwards saw this to be so, and knew that the desert came to their forefathers from the loving providence of God.

Do we not see the same forethought of love in some of the disappointments of our life? We can see now that we were not fit for the danger, or temptation, of the near way to the things on which our hearts were set. We were brought out till the Promised Land seemed almost in sight, and ruthlessly we were led away round about by the long way through the desert. We had our dream of happiness by a short cut, and we never had it realized. We had our high ambitions; we knew they were not to be had merely for the asking; we knew we should have to fight and we were willing, but we have never had the chance. We have been edged away from that straight course to our designs. We have been led by circumstances over which we had no control through the wilderness.

Whatever it was that lies back in our life, something in our business or professional career, or in our home life, some blight in our ambition or our affections—that thing that turned us off from the near way and took us about by the way of the wilderness—can we now see love in it, a tender mercy to ourselves, though at the time that thought would have been a mockery? Faith is not made perfect till it can *justify the past* to us, as well as give hope for the future. Cannot many a grateful and humble heart say, Hitherto hath the Lord led me, though it has been by the longest road and not the near way of my early dream?

¶ 'When I was called to the ministry,' writes Stanley Jones, 'I had money to go to college to study, but it was all swept away by calamity, the support of the family thrown on me, and the way to fulfil that call blocked.' Called, and then the straight way to his goal immediately barred! And yet, he says, that period of his life was one of the very best,

fitting him as nothing else could have done for his life-work. Knowing poverty by experience it enabled him to understand the poverty of India. Without that testing period, he confesses, life's music would have been thin, lacking the rich note of suffering.

2. The second and deeper reason for the choice of the long road for the people of Israel was not only because they could not bear the sudden danger and struggle, but also because they *needed the discipline* of the desert to make a nation of them. They had to learn law, and order, and capacity to govern themselves. They had not only to be trained as soldiers, but also to be trained as citizens. There is no near way to turn a mob into an army; still less is there a near way to turn it into a nation. Preparation, training, discipline were needed; and the way of the wilderness was the only way that could make them fit to inherit the land of the promise. We can see some meaning in, if not necessity for, the discipline of disappointment from this point of view. If the purpose is not to give the Promised Land but to make them worthy to possess it, not to give us happiness but to make us *fit* to be happy, not to grant us our desire but to breed in us noble desires, not the mere favour of possession but the virtue which merits possession, then we can see how the long road may be shorter in the long run than the near way.

There are no short cuts to anything in the world worth arriving at. There is no short and royal road to learning. It can only be attained by labour and trouble and the pain of thought and toil of research. There is no short cut to mastery of art by the way of the land of the Philistines. There is no short and royal road to character. It is the fruit of discipline, and its crowning quality is the endurance that is built up by faith and patience and love and hope.

¶ Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *Celestial Railroad* tells how he visited Bunyan's classic ground long after Bunyan, and found that a railway had now been opened up from the City of Destruction to the Celestial Heights, and things made very much more easy for the pilgrims. The Hill Difficulty had been tunnelled and the Valley of Humiliation filled up with the debris. The Slough had been reclaimed and was now good solid ground, and so on. It is

a skit, of course, on some popular religious tendencies. There are moods that come to men, baffled and hard beset, when they wish perhaps that there was such an easy quick road to purity and the high uplands of Christian character and influence. But there is none.

There is no short cut to spiritual power or communion, any more than to wisdom or to character. Take prayer, for example, the great instrument of spiritual progress. It is not a talisman that can get us even spiritual good as by magic. It is the long road by the way of the wilderness. We must tread it with courage and hope and endurance. 'Pray without ceasing,' said the Master, stating a law of the spiritual world—till we turn to God as naturally as the flowers turn to the light. The strength of religion is not in the glow and the rapture and the ecstasy, not in the rare moment of the Transfiguration. It is got by the long road, when God leads a man about through the way of the wilderness, when we join ourselves to the journey of the Son of Man, whose way led by the desert and the Cross.

If we walk in the way of God, the longest road round is the shortest way home. If God be with us, then the way of the wilderness is the way of peace: 'yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil.'

*He leads round, but He leads right ;
Heaviest burden groweth light ;
Marah ! Elim ! Wilderness !
Each in turn the Lord doth bless ;
Canaan shines, far-off but bright ;
He leads round, but He leads right.*

*He leads round, but He leads right ;
Cloud by day and fire by night ;
Morn by morn, ' Let God arise
Scattering all our enemies ' ;
And we'll sing with evening light ;
He leads round, but He leads right.¹*

¹ A. B. Grosart.

The Pillar of Cloud and Fire

Exod. xiii. 21.—‘And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; to go by day and night.’

1. SIR HANBURY BROWN, in his book, *The Land of Goshen and the Exodus*, describes the beginning of a caravan march : ‘The great caravan which every year sets out from Cairo to Mecca has a conductor on a camel leading the way. With him march men with large torches, which are kept alight during the night and illuminate the column of smoke above them, so that it appears a pillar of fire. During the day, when the head of the caravan is difficult to see on account of the intervening hills and mounds of sand, the torches are kept burning, so that instead of the light which served during the night a column of smoke indicates to the straggling caravan from afar the direction of the march and the time and place of a halt.’ And similarly Doughty, in his *Travels in Arabia Deserta* : ‘The night sky was dark and showery when we removed, and cressets of iron cages set upon poles were borne to light the way, upon serving men’s shoulders, in all the companies.’

There was nothing unnatural or prodigious about the fiery pillar : it was a thing in common use among the eastern nations. But the Israelites, with their peculiar spiritual sensitiveness, had wonder enough to see God in it. In all that helped and protected them they perceived His invisible hand. Every blessing was to them a holy miracle of God’s special providence. It was He who beset them behind and before. When they saw the smoke-cloud they felt secure : they were protected by it, and all protection comes from the good God. Did He not *dwell* in the cloud, then ?

We may be perfectly sure of the normality of the facts in a way in which the ancient Israelite was not. And yet we may value that spiritual estimate of facts which made him turn the commonplace into the miraculous. For to wise men the commonplace is miraculous. To Peter Bell the primrose by the river’s brim is just a yellow primrose and nothing more. To the poet it is an embodiment of the eternal beauty, a messenger of glad tidings, a symbol of God ; it is a miracle created by divine alchemy out of mere earth and air, a lasting source of astonishment and awe.

¶ It is said that C. H. Spurgeon used to rejoice over the beauty of any little flower put into his hands just as much as though it had never grown in the earth, under the influence of sun and shower, but as though he had been watching God fashioning it with His own hands.

It is the spiritual intuition of man which sees miracle in everyday fact, or more startlingly in abnormal fact. Once the miraculous interpretation has been established, the fact itself is apt to be transmuted into an impossible shape. But we can be grateful for the impossible shape it takes if thereby, albeit clumsily, man’s sense of astonishment at things, of a divine presence in things, ‘something far more deeply inter-fused’ in them than a flippant or unwondering glance can see, is preserved and quickened. And this is an outstanding merit in these Old Testament tales. Everything is regarded with eyes of holy wonder. Every striking incident of the long journeyings in the wilderness is taken to be an exhibition, one way or another, of the power of God. And so the story of the Forty Years has become a symbol of the life-pilgrimage of every man ; not because it was in itself more marvellous than many redeeming passages in the history of other nations, but because of the reverent wonder that brooded over its every detail, and heightened every effect therein by a penetrating vision of the providence of God.

2. We of later generations, as we make our pilgrimage across the wilderness of ignorance and sorrow, ever pursuing the dream of the promised country of happiness, and ever lured onward by faint glimpses of its borderland, look back to this ancient march of Israel, with its marvellous equipment of providential care, as a type of our own experience ; and we take encouragement from it to face our own dangers. The hand that led them is still present to guide us also into a fair land flowing with milk and honey. Now and again, when the clouds lift, we seem to see on the horizon the Delectable Mountains, and we know that we shall arrive. But as yet we toil across the desert, often hungry and weary of heart, often in peril of battle and peril of storm ; and we should falter were it not that we felt God’s strong defence about us in the pillar of cloud and fire.

In youth the pleasant country seems so near and easy to attain. We marvel indignantly that our predecessors have not quickened the pace

and won their way home. We rush into the van shouting lustily to everybody to hurry up. And then as we struggle and toil to hasten the millennium we gradually feel the dead pull of the world's inertia. It is so slow to move. Heroes and prophets and martyrs suffer and labour for the race, but men still tarry in their foolish idolatries, until it sometimes seems as if mankind never could reach its true home. And then God in His grace sends some ray of light—an act of splendid kindness, a word that flashes like the words of Jesus—and in that ray we catch a glimpse of the distant hills again, our souls' home. This world of wars and bickerings and falsehoods and lusts, of pain and hunger and loneliness—this is not what man is ultimately destined to. He belongs other where. We are meant to reach a country where love reigns, and joy and peace—where no one any longer experiences bewilderment and languor and unsatisfied longing, but where all work is pleasure and all life is praise, and God has wiped away all tears from men's eyes.

¶ In the bitter struggle of the Civil War in England, Henry Vaughan, the poet, turning his thought from the bloodshed and violence of earth to the peace of the heavenly country, wrote :

My Soul, there is a countrie
Afar beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged Sentie
All skilfull in the wars.
There, above noise and danger,
Sweet peace sits, crown'd with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.
He is thy gracious friend
And (O my Soul awake !)
Did in pure love descend,
To die here for thy sake.
If thou canst get but thither
There grows the flowre of peace,
The rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortresse, and thy ease.
Leave then thy foolish ranges ;
For none can thee secure,
But One, who never changes,
Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

So we struggle forward, often disillusioned and often discouraged, but still saved by hope, for we believe that there is a wise Providence

guiding all things to an issue in which we shall rest satisfied.

And meanwhile there is the recognized pillar of the Divine Presence about us—that ineffable sense of protection and contentment which is the unfailing fruit of vital faith. Thus protected, martyrs have sung their way to the stake, and the leaders of many a seemingly lost cause have carried on unflinchingly, 'still nursing the unconquerable hope'; while humble people in the midst of tiresome and monotonous duties have been able to talk in the strain of Brother Lawrence: 'The time of business,' said he, 'does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were on my knees at the blessed sacrament.' Vexations and weariness and perils are all passed through by such folk, as Jesus passed through the crowd that would have flung Him over the cliff at Nazareth. Nothing daunts them, or disturbs their equanimity. 'The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.' 'Because thou hast made the Lord, the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee.' God's presence is like a sheltering tent that surrounds these people as they move, and makes them immune from trouble.

¶ If one lives a long time immersed in God's grace, there stretches across one's soul a calm which nothing can destroy. When in prison, when marching with 15,000 people in a riot, when threatened by daggers, the jewel of peace within me was in no wise disturbed. When in an automobile crash the city tram rumbled over me, the inner peace remained. When my sight was threatened the calm remained. I stand amazed at this calm. Neither the earth's quaking, nor fire, nor blizzard, nor avalanche can shake it.¹

3. The sole promise of any attainable blessedness for humanity lies in the fact that God really is love. Without the conviction of God's love there is nothing but a land of speculation ahead, and a land of strife and misery here and now. With it there is present safety and a steady approach to a land of *promise*. In a universe where the qualities of the Eternal Being were not holiness and love, it is conceivable that

¹ Kagawa.

men might make for themselves pathetic little temporary oases of good-will in the desert of blind fate or mocking hate that surrounded them; but the abiding city of our heart's desire could never be reached. Nor could men, in their heroic effort to reach blessedness, feel that God was with them, and so reach the peace and contentment in their pilgrimage which the sense of His presence brings. If God is not love, and if His blessed will is not surrounding us, the only sensible course is universal suicide. Unfaith reduces life to an absurdity. But men simply cannot acquiesce in the notion of a non-sensical universe. They may stumble among doubts, but it is only the faith in God as an eternal will of holiness that really answers their questionings and satisfies their longings. The Church which maintains this faith is their ultimate refuge. It is in and through His Church that God safeguards us. What other safeguarding can there be in the arid and dangerous wilderness of our human sin and ignorance save the fellowship of a faith in the 'love that rules the sun and all the stars?' Nothing can succour us but the comradeship which grows out of faith in God's holiness and love. But that does succour us absolutely. In the comradeship of this faith the pilgrim band goes forward through the darkness, and the guiding light gleams clear before them.

Finding Him at this altar of our fellowship, and experiencing the safety and sweetness of His indwelling, we can have no fear in the present and no doubt for the future. In His Name we put our trust.

Our Marching Orders

Exod. xiv. 15.—'And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.'

THE message of the text is contained in the simplest of its words, 'Go forward.' Seeing that the one difficulty of the moment for the Israelites was that the only way open was the way back, and that even that was being closed up by the advancing hosts of Pharaoh, the command was, at least, arresting. 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.'

We are in a somewhat difficult position, because we know the sequel to this command.

We know how presently, according to this record, God made a highway for His people through the divided waters of the sea; and the fact that we know the sequel makes it a little difficult for us to feel the full impact of the command. We may say: 'That was all very well for these people; God was about to divide the sea for them. But what about us?' Let us, then, get back as far as we can into the real experience of these children of Israel, and try to understand what the command meant to them while as yet the sequel was unknown. So we may be led and helped in hours when we cannot see a clear way before us.

1. In the first place this command to the children of Israel to go forward emphasized the break with the past. The first temptation in an hour of real darkness and supreme difficulty is to retreat. Listen to what these people said to Moses: 'Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.' They saw two alternatives—either to die in the wilderness, or to go back to Egypt and its slavery and its graves. Observe their choice; they said it were better to remain there than to die here. As we, so far away, think of these people, we say, 'What unutterable folly!' But let us stand with them and look at the situation as they looked at it, and we shall better understand their feeling. In Egypt there was at least food, even if there was hardship; in Egypt there was at least a certain sense of freedom, for they there knew nothing of the terror of the unknown.

This is a common experience in individual life. How many of us have come to such an hour as this. The vision came to us once of things higher and nobler and purer, and the vision captured us, and we set our faces toward the realization. Moreover, we have had great hours of victory when all life was beautiful and bright. But to-day we are hemmed in, imprisoned; we can make no painful inch of progress. The ideal is still admired, but the way is barred. We cannot do what we had desired to do, circumstances are against us, we are against ourselves in some infinite mystery of personality that we cannot account for. We are in the darkness,

encamped in a place with the foe behind and the deep before. What shall we do? Now comes the temptation to give up our ideals, and go back upon the things that we have said and done and been; to return once more to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, to use the apostolic description. A high ideal, as the inspiration of conduct, always means strain and conflict, and now we are hemmed in. Let us make things easier by going back.

The same temptation comes to us perpetually in all those higher purposes, and outlooks, and enterprises of our being. We saw the vision once of the Kingdom of God on earth, with its breadth and its beauty and its beneficence. We dreamed our dreams, and we looked to a day when humanity should be no longer an aggregation of individuals engaged in conflict one with another, but a great brotherhood—

When the war drums throb no longer,
And the battle flags are furled.

We dreamed our dreams, and we set our faces toward the realization of those dreams. Where do we stand now? The present hour is the darkest in which we have ever lived; and we are inclined to think that the world has never seen an hour much darker. What shall we do? The temptation is to go back to barbarism, to the perpetuation of strife as between individuals and nations, in order to secure to the more mighty the things that men are wanting. Let us give up this dream of a Kingdom of God! Let us go back! It will be so much easier. This is the temptation of the hour of darkness.

2. Now, the Word of the Lord, to the people of the Lord, in the presence of such an hour, whether in individual experience or in these wider world-outlooks, is the message of the text: 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' And here let us say three things: there can be no going back; there must be no going back; there need be no going back.

(1) There can be no going back. This first statement seems to cut the nerve of the argument, for if there can be no going back, why discuss the matter? Nevertheless, it is well to remember this: there can be no going back. Take the story as illustration. For the children of Israel, encamped before Pi-hahiroth, with the

sea in front and the foe behind, it was no use saying they would go back; they could not. Pharaoh was taking care of that. He was on their heels with his chariots.

Individually this is always true. You have seen the vision; you cannot go back! The enemy will not have you back. Drift back into acceptance of low ideals, and try to intermingle with the enemy, and see in what despite you will be held, and how you will be put to bear burdens and endure slaveries of which you have never dreamed! You cannot go back!

(2) Again, there must be no going back, because that which was left when we first marched from the low level of our living is made more terrible by the fact of that which has been seen and sought. Is there anything more tragic in God's universe than the unrest and misery of the man who has known the high and turned back to the low. No! There must be no going back, however dark the day.

(3) Again, there need be no going back. And this is not to argue from the sequel. Let there be no dividing sea, no triumphant march of the delivered hosts to the other side; let there be no song of triumph on the other shore—still there need be no going back. If we are beaten, if the high ideals that inspired us in our individual living cannot be realized, if that great and glorious vision of the establishment of the Kingdom of God is never to be an established fact in the world, then at least we can die decently where we are, affirming that we have abandoned nothing of the high idealism that filled us.

¶ In the old days in Scotland when the Covenanters were being persecuted, many of them had to hide in dens in the mountains. They lived there long months while the soldiers hunted them like beasts. Into those dens little groups gathered that they might receive instruction in the Word and worship in quietness. A lad named James Douglas held what he considered the high office of taking food to a minister in one of these dens. He knew ways through the mountains others did not know. The soldiers knew where he was going, but they could not catch him. One day, however, they caught him on his way back, and the captain ordered him to turn and show them where he had come from. James said he could not do it. The captain caught him up and rode along the edge of a rough precipice five hundred feet

down, and holding him over it gave him one minute to change his mind. The boy turned his head and looked up: 'Then drop me down, if you must!'

3. This Word of God to a people in such an hour of impossibility compels a certain conclusion, and the conclusion is this—if we are to go forward God must undertake the matter. Going forward depends upon Him. There is only one way out of this *impasse*. We see the foe behind us; before us is the sea; the land of sedges is all around; no marching is possible; and we are to go forward! There is only one way out, and that way God must find.

¶ When Cromwell was at Dunbar, before the battle he wrote home in a despatch: 'We are upon an engagement very difficult. The enemy hath blocked up our way at the Pass at Copperspath, through which we cannot get without almost a miracle.' One of his officers, describing the fight afterwards in a letter, told of the crisis in the engagement and how, 'the sun appearing on the sea, I heard Noll say, "Now let God arise, and His enemies shall be scattered."'

¶ In *The British Weekly*, a few months before he died, Sir William Robertson Nicoll wrote an article with the title: 'Why Not Try God?' He was speaking of the difficulties of the hour then, and he was looking at what men were doing. They were trying this, that, and the other, trying organization, cleverness, wit, and wisdom, and they were not getting anywhere. 'Why not try God?' Why not get back to the one fundamental thing of our faith? 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' saith the Lord!

We recognize that the future is finally His responsibility. For us, what is the moment to produce? A venture of faith based upon the highest reason. The highest reason is that God commands. Therefore, toward that sea, impossible and uncrossable, we are to set our faces. The moment men take up that attitude they become prepared for God's highway. All that God wants is that we go forward, however unequal to doing so we may feel. There is a man in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* called Mr. Feeble-Mind. Here is what he said once, 'This I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed. My way is before me, my

mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am, as you see, but of a feeble mind.'

'My mind is beyond the river that hath no bridge.' No bridge! Is our mind beyond that river? Then let us run. We cannot to-day. Then let us go. We cannot to-day. Then let us creep. Only one thing is of supreme importance, and that is that we keep our heart fixed on the other side. That is going forward. With such feeble-minded folk God will win His victory presently.

4. 'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward!' Is it then wrong to pray? It depends entirely upon the nature of our praying. If we are halting to pray when we ought to be marching, it is wrong. Wherefore criest thou unto me? There is an attitude of prayer which hinders. Real prayer began when they went forward. That was a venture of faith, faith which expressed itself in obedience to a command. That is true prayer.

¶ D. L. Moody used to tell how once he came upon a group of wealthy American Christians praying for the removal of a debt of one hundred pounds on their church building. 'Gentlemen,' said Mr Moody in his incisive way, 'I don't think if I were you, I should trouble the Lord in that matter!'

'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' To go back would be to go back to slavery and death. To go forward is possible, for if God be for us, who can be against us?

Lo! this our marching order still,
As on that day of God's great power,
Forward! it is the Master's will,
The Saviour's hour.

Behind, the foe is hastening on,
Eager his purpose to fulfil,
And Forward safety lies, but none
In standing still.

Across your path a stormy sea
Is breaking on a waste of sand;
But God's ways on the waters be
As on the land.

Forward! He will be with you there
Wherever He would have you go,
And to your fear and your despair
A path will show.

Forward! to learn the higher truth
Through harder tasks of duty done,
What though the way be rough or smooth
If Life be won? ¹

The End of a Tyranny

Exod. xiv. 30.—'And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.'

IT was the Red Sea which the children of Israel had crossed dry-shod, 'which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned.' The parted waves had swept back upon the host of the pursuers. The tumult and terror, which had rent the air, had sunk into silence, and all that the escaped people saw was here and there a drowned body cast up upon the bank, where they stood with the great flood between them and the land of their long captivity and oppression. It meant everything to the Israelites. It was the end of a terrible period in their history. A thousand desperate rebellions, which had not set them free, must have come up in their minds. Sometimes they had been successful for a time, but always the old tyranny had closed back upon them more pitilessly than before. But now all that was over; whatever else they might have to meet, the Egyptian captivity was at an end. Each dead Egyptian face on which they looked was token and witness to them that the power of their masters over them had perished. They stood and gazed at the hard features, set and stern, but powerless in death, and then turned their faces to the desert, and to whatever unknown experiences God might have in store for them.

1. The hostility of Hebrew and Egyptian had gone on for generations. However their enmity may be disguised or hidden, the tyrant and the slave are always foes. If hope had ever lived, it had died long ago. Patient endurance, grim submission, with desperate revolt whenever the tyranny grew most tyrannical—these had seemed to be the only virtues left to the poor serfs. Not to be demoralized and ruined by their servitude, to keep their self-respect, to be sure still that they were Abraham's children and that Abraham's God still cared for them, patience and fortitude—these must have been

¹ W. C. Smith.

the exhortations which they addressed to their poor souls as they toiled on in the brickyard or by the river.

It does not prove anything about our present life, but it certainly sets us to asking new questions about it, perhaps to believing greater things concerning it, when in the story we see all this changed. The day came when the chains were broken and the slaves went free. Are, then, our slaveries as hopeless as they seem? Are we condemned only to struggle with our enemies in desperate fight, and shall we not hope to see them some day dead like the Egyptians on the seashore?

Surely it is good for us to ask that question, for nothing is more remarkable than the way in which, both in public and personal life, men accept the permanence of conditions which are certainly some day to disappear. The whole of history which teaches us that mankind does conquer its enemies and see its tyrants by and by lying dead on the seashore, often appears to have no influence with the minds of men, absorbed as they are in what seems a hopeless struggle. But look around! Where are the Egyptians which used to hold the human body and the human soul in slavery? The divine right of rulers, the dominion of the priest over the human conscience, the ownership of man by man, the accepted inequality of human lots, the degradation of womanhood, the massacre of child-life—do we realize how these tyrants of the human race have lost their power over large regions of human life? They are dead Egyptians. It is even difficult for us to imagine a world in which they were once supreme.

Is there anything more wonderful than the way in which men to-day are daring to think of the abolition of war, of poverty, of ignorance, of disease, the sweeping away of mere money competition as the motive power of life, the dethronement of fear from the high place which it has held among the shaping powers of human destiny? But the conviction is gaining ground that these also shall perish, as other great evils have perished before them, and we shall be permitted to see these also dead upon the seashore of Time.

¶ Henry Ward Beecher said once in his pulpit: 'Twenty years ago in my most extravagant mood, I could not have dared to say to Christ, "Let me live to see slavery destroyed"; and yet I have lived to see it destroyed. One such

coronation, one such epoch lived through, I should be indeed most unreasonable to ask to live through any more such victories. . . . I shall die before I see commerce and industry fairly regenerated. Some of you will live to see the beginnings of it. But I foresee it. I preach it. My word will not die when I am dead. The seed has sprouted and you cannot unsprout it.¹

2. But do we believe in the death of our own Egyptians? What is your Egyptian? Some passion of the flesh or of the mind?—for the mind has its tyrannical passions as well as the flesh. Years ago, you became its captive. Perhaps you cannot at all remember when. Perhaps, like these children of Israel, you were born into its captivity. As you grew older you knew that it was slavery, but it was such a part of all you were and all you did that you accepted it. That has not made you cease to struggle with it, but it has made you accept struggle hopelessly, as something never to be outgrown and left behind. You have looked forward into the stretch of years, and in imagination you have seen yourself an old man, still wrestling with the tyranny of your besetting sin, getting it down, planting your foot upon its neck; absolutely fixed and determined never to give up the fight until you die—to die fighting. All this is perfectly familiar. Countless noble and patient souls live in such self-knowledge and consecration. But there comes something vastly beyond all these, when the soul dares to believe that its enemy may die, that the lust, or the passion, or the greed may absolutely pass out of existence, and the nature be absolutely free—sure no doubt to meet other enemies and to struggle till the end, but done with that enemy forever, with that Egyptian finally dead upon the seashore.

¶ The most important transaction in life, said Carlyle, describing his own experience, was on a day when—after years of acquiescence, years of being dragged at the chariot-wheels of his own tyrant fear, with its taunting voice ever ringing in his ears, 'Thou art mine, my bond-slave, mine'—suddenly something within him sprang up and took control, and looked that tyrant in the face. 'I am not thine,' it cried, 'but my own, and free! And I hate, hate, despise thee!' ¹

¹ J. S. Stewart.

This is no optimistic fancy: it is proved experience. Sisyphus, in the old story, had a dreadful fate: always he had to keep pushing the great mass of rock up the slopes of the hill, and always when he was nearing the summit, when he was thinking—'This time I shall do it, I am almost there—steady now, steady!—one touch more and it is done'—always it came rolling down, tumbling and dashing to the foot; and he had to begin again, and so on to all eternity. But God means no child of His to be a moral Sisyphus! 'Our soul,' cried a psalmist long ago, 'is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped!' And sometimes, when you have battled long and hard and prayerfully with an evil thing, there comes a day when you suddenly realize that the pull of it, the lure and magnetism and fascination of it, are not there any longer: the snare is broken, the bird escaped—your soul flies free! What a tremendous thrill there is in these words, spoken to a people who for long weary years had felt the scourge of Egypt on their souls: 'The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.' All those bitter, humiliating years, and then—no more again for ever! It is possible, by prayer and persistence and the grace of God in Christ, possible even in this present life, to gain victories over temptation that are final and complete, final in the sense that that particular temptation will never trouble you again.

Once there were three crosses on an eastern hill, and round them there was thick darkness and silence, darkness as of midnight, silence as of death; when suddenly, stabbing the darkness, shattering the silence, came from the centre cross a cry, a shout—'It is finished!' Take courage. This is the glory of the fight of faith, that one day God, looking out from heaven, may hear His own Son's words upon your lips, that one day out of the darkness and silence of your struggle there may come the cry—'It is finished! Finished the temptation! Finished the lure of it! Finished the tyranny of it! Other foes there may be yet to meet, but this one—never again. This snare is broken. This Egyptian is dead on the seashore.'

Miriam

Exod. xv. 20.—‘And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.’

1. THE Bible story of Miriam is given in three scenes. The first has the river Nile for a background. We see her watching the little cradle-boat among the long reeds of the Nile—a dark-eyed girl of perhaps fifteen years of age, clever, sensible, and self-possessed. All the world knows the interesting story connected with the preservation of the child Moses: the resolve on the part of this Hebrew mother to commit her little one to the ark of bulrushes and to place it there in that sheltered nook of the river where the great princess and her maidens came each day; for something told her that the helpless babe would appeal to the heart of the heathen princess.

Miriam had something of the faith, something of the vision and resource of her mother; and while she was told merely to observe and report, she saw the opportunity of doing something better. She heard the exclamation of the princess, ‘This is one of the Hebrews’ children’; she saw the look of pity and tenderness in the face of the princess. And at once her mind was made up. ‘Yes, my lady, this is one of the Hebrews’ children. I could get one of the Hebrew women to nurse it for you.’ And soon mother and child are brought together again, and Jochebed hears the gracious command, ‘Take and train this child for me and I will give thee thy wages.’

One wonders if the princess took in the exact situation. Some think she did, others that she did not. Certainly Miriam played her part wonderfully well. She said nothing of her own relation to the child. Her interest was due to the fact that this was one of the Hebrews’ children. She said nothing about the nurse’s relation to the child. Yet one has the suspicion that the princess must have known; the eagerness of the girl Miriam, the affection of the Hebrew nurse—these would tell their own tale; but it is an additional good trait in the character of the princess that she pretended not to see the plot; and of the clemency of her nature spared the child and claimed him for her son.

¶ The favourite child of Rameses II was his daughter Bint-Anath, and the profile of her body down to her delicate waist is incised on

the granite flank of the smaller of her father’s colossal images in Memphis. She is one of fifty sisters and more, yet it is impossible not to play with the idea that this is that very daughter who adopted the Hebrew child, all the more as her name indicates that her mother was of Semitic origin (for *bint* to this day means ‘girl’ in Arabic). She cannot but have had a shrewd idea that the child in the ark was an Israelite, and the Semitic blood in her caused her to look on the tiny creature with an indulgent eye.¹

2. The next scene in which Miriam plays a part is a very different one. Egypt has vanished and another world has dawned. The slaves have become free. Again they stand upon the banks of a water; but it is no longer the water of the Nile river; it is that of the Red Sea. They stand upon these banks triumphant; they have emancipated themselves from the Egyptian thralldom. And their emancipation finds vent in song. The voice of Miriam rings out in the camp as, timbrel in hand, she sounds the notes of a noble song of exultation and thankfulness.

Even to-day, thousands of years after, we feel the spirit of the scene, and we seem to feel the surging swell of triumph as Miriam sang out that triumphal song, ‘Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.’ This is the woman whose name lives in the Hebrew history, emerging from that stormy and troubled time as a figure of singular courage, of impassioned utterance, of intense patriotism. It was as if the genius of the Hebrew people had incarnated itself in a noble female figure and had broken into fine audibility, and through its voice and song the whole camp was thrilled and inspired and uplifted.

We cannot, of course, go into any analysis of this poem; it is a war song with a religious basis, and a religious spirit pervading it. It belongs to a very early period, and yet there are passages in it, like that second verse, ‘The Lord is my strength and song and He is become my salvation; He is my God and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father’s God and I will exalt Him,’ passages that link this Old Testament Mary to the New Testament Mary, and that make the ‘Magnificat’ of the one not altogether unworthy of a place beside the ‘Magnificat’ of the other.

¹ Louis Golding, *In the Steps of Moses the Lawgiver*, 47.

¶ After the defeat of the Scottish army at Dunbar 'The Lord General made a halt,' says Hodgson, 'and sang the Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm, till our horse could gather for the chase. Hundred-and-seventeenth Psalm, at the foot of the Doon Hill: there we uplift it, to the tune of Bangor, or some still higher score, and roll it strong and great against the sky.'¹

3. In the third scene in which Miriam appears she plays a less noble part. We have passed from the Nile river; we have passed from the Red Sea; we have entered into the heart of the wilderness. And we have left behind also the song of triumph. A cloud has settled over the singer—a moral cloud.

That long wilderness experience was a great trial, especially to the leaders of the people. It tried their faith, it tried their temper and enthusiasm. They found it difficult to keep alive those early ideals associated with the birth of the nation and with the great experiences of Sinai. And probably it indicated a lapse on the part of Moses to take to wife a Cushite or Ethiopian woman. It was so regarded at least by his sister Miriam. It was a tremendous blow to her that Moses should bring into the family circle an alien woman. And, clearly enough, to Miriam's mind this was not only a retrograde step on the part of Moses but a lapse from grace, a betrayal of the Divine trust reposed in him as leader of Israel.

Miriam's pain is all the greater because she thinks she is shut out from a place in the councils of the nation to which her great gifts entitle her. Under this jealous feeling her love almost turns to hatred. She wins over Aaron to her faction, and threatens to break up the camp unless more regard is paid to her place and position in the councils of the people. Such seems to have been the temptation which underlies the words, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?'

¶ Years ago in Free Saint George's Church in Edinburgh, Alexander Whyte ruled the pulpit like a king. Then Hugh Black was called to be his junior colleague. They used to say that in the morning Whyte black-balled the saints and that in the evening Black white-washed the sinners. As the years passed, Alexander Whyte saw his junior colleague forging to the front.

¹ Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. 37.

He had a note that caught the ear of the younger generation; he had a wider influence, large congregations. Whyte told a friend of his what a bitter struggle with jealous fear that caused him, and the friend, knowing how gracious and lovable Whyte was and absolutely loyal to his colleague, would not believe it. 'Ah,' said Whyte, 'you don't know the black depths of the human heart.'¹

Miriam and Aaron were both severely rebuked, but the chief punishment fell upon Miriam. 'The cloud removed from over the tent; and, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow.' Aaron understood the sin when he saw the result of it, and immediately he appealed to Moses for forgiveness that his sister might 'not be as one dead,' because leprosy was simply a living death. It is beautiful to see that the heart of the injured brother is as quick to respond as that of the other to plead. 'And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.'

The healing and forgiveness sought for Miriam were not refused. She was, however, subjected to a temporary disgrace. She was expelled from the congregation of the Lord for seven days. She was placed during that time in the position of a moral leper who could not be touched without spiritual uncleanness. She had to bear the sorrow of seeing Israel's march to the Promised Land arrested—arrested on her account during the days of her banishment. These were among the things that Miriam could not forget and never did forget; and we may say of her, what is said later of one of the kings of Israel, that she 'went softly' all the days of her life.

We hear nothing more of Miriam till we come to the twentieth chapter of Numbers. The children of Israel are nearing the end of their wanderings; they have entered upon their last year; they have reached Kadesh, in the upper part of the wilderness of Sin; and all that is told us of the end is in two sentences: 'And the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.'

Miriam never reached the Promised Land; she died in the wilderness. She died when the goal was almost won, at the opening of the fortieth year of Israel's wanderings—by only a very short time predeceasing her two brothers.

¹ H. E. Fosdick.

It seems a sad thing to have fainted so near to the crown. Yet a 'death in the desert' was a fitting close for such a life as hers. Miriam was a bird of song, and songs are sweetest in the night. Miriam was meant to sing in the wilderness and for the wilderness; and when the wilderness was past her work was done. Her mission was to cheer the desert; and when the end of the desert was reached her task was over.

Jehovah-Ropheka

'The Lord is thy Healer.'

Exod. xv. 26.—'I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

A NEW experience discovered a new name for God. The sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah by the casting in of a certain tree supplied the parable of the new name, 'I am the Lord that healeth thee.' It is not likely that there was any magical or medicinal quality in the wood; the miracle was attributed to the interposition of Jehovah, and it was used to illustrate the Divine intention to be the health and wholesomeness of Israel's life upon certain conditions: 'If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.'

The common usage of words has limited the reference of healing to bodily conditions. Israel's experience of the plagues that fell upon Egypt and their own immunity from these plagues proved the Divine power over physical life, and would give easy currency to this watchword. But the idea of health and healing had in earlier times a much larger content. The word occurs in this greater sense in the Psalms: 'I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance.' 'That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.' Here God is accepted as the complete wholeness and wholesomeness of existence, both for the individual life and for the whole world. Wycliffe and Tyndale use the word suggestively in our Lord's saying to Zacchæus: 'This day is health come to thine house.' The Anglican

Prayer Book makes the confession, 'We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us.' The word had a much more comprehensive and more spiritual meaning in the past than we attribute to it to-day. There is a sickness that is not of the body, and there is a health that is more than physical.

1. There is a sort of public condition that is sickness. The promise 'I will heal their land' (2 Chron. vii. 14) indicates that there existed a state of national unsoundness. Persia was described some time ago as 'a sick old man.' David Livingstone mourned 'the open sore of Africa.' A whole continent was smitten with festering affliction. The slave raids and the slave trade made deep wounds in the Negro continent. With imperishable earnestness he called down the blessing of heaven upon all who would help to heal this running sore, which was not only draining the vitality of a race, but also corrupting the moral values of the world.

But Jesus saw the human malady on a bigger scale. He discerned the sickness of a universe, and He made Himself the world's physician. For what is sin but the greatest malady that afflicts mankind? And yet He accepted the rule of our self-estimates: 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' Of those who knew their moral ineptitude, weakness, limitations, He said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' This He said confronting all the disorders and maladies that afflict the world. He had the spirit and the skill to be the physician of the whole world's torment and trouble. He knew every sickness and every disease for what it was. No disguise deceived Him. He knew what was in man.

¶ When Sir William Robertson Nicoll was ordered abroad for the rest of his life, he refused the verdict of any specialist unless it was confirmed by another. He consulted Sir Andrew Clark, who told him he could with assurance remain in this country. 'I liked him better than any other doctor I have seen,' said the patient; 'he was so frank.'

¶ Christ was not a reformer, though He changed many customs, modes, and ideals. He was not a philosopher, though His wisdom penetrated all forms of thought. He was not a

statesman, though His teaching refashioned and redirected the policies of empires and states. Men were sick and the world ill, and He was the 'Great Physician.' He renewed, restored, and recreated the whole of man's life, so that in Him each life might be complete and whole again. It was all one with Him whether the disorder was one that disturbed body, mind, or soul.¹

2. 'I will heal their backsliding' (Hos. xiv. 4) runs another promise affecting the inward state of a people's life. It alludes to the spiritual condition of those who have gone back upon their vow, renounced their fealty and their faith.

This depressed, impoverished condition of life is put in various impressive and illuminating ways. Jesus spoke of those who had put their hand to the plough and looked back; the look back meant not only a twisted and irregular furrow, it revealed a distracted mind, a divided heart—divided between a tendency to go on and a disposition to go back; it disclosed a life of unsatisfactory attachments, suffering from disorganized affections.

He described other conditions in terms of a 'smoking flax.' The light of life was burning low: there was no cheerful flame, only a smouldering fire, or a guttering candle, or a spluttering lamp. And He said He would not put it out; not because He liked the smoke, but because He could change it to a flame. He could give the languishing life a more wholesome vitality.

He knew of others who resembled 'a bruised reed.' The music had gone out of life, the harmonies and radiances had ceased. The bruised reed of the shepherd will pipe no music to the flocks and hills. It had been bruised by the foot of the cattle, or by the frost, or by mishandling, by abuse or disuse. Anxiety, care, failure, sin, stop the music of the soul; they disturb and disorganize the whole life. But He will not destroy the pitiful thing. He will heal it; He will repair and restore every hurt that sin has made and renew the music of the soul.

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel,
For some are sick, and some are sad;
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had;

¹ John S. Bunting.

And some are pressed with worldly care,
And some are tried with sinful doubt:
And some such grievous passions tear,
That only Thou canst cast them out:

And some have found the world is vain.
Yet from the world they break not free;
And some have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
For none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.

He meets the whole list of our disabilities with confidence: 'I will heal their backsliding,' thus covering all our ailments of will and faith and character. It was said of a hospitable man that he 'had a house for any but successful men.' He had learned that hospitality from Jesus Christ: 'They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick'; for the sick He had, and ever has, an open house.

3. 'I will restore health unto thee, I will heal thee of thy wounds' (Jer. xxx. 17) is a word that carries His skill to the inwardness of grief and care. 'He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds.' Hearts are broken by bereavement, by withered hopes, by frustrated desire, by all the weight and burden of uncertainty. Mrs Oliphant confessed when her last child, Agnes, died that she was 'sick of believing, she longed to see and know.' Broken physical health does not always stop there. Sometimes it is the effect and sometimes the cause of a dejected mind.

It has been said that in the whole literature of spiritual destitution, there is no more pathetic story than that of Heine's last glimpse of the Venus of Milo. It was the last day he was able to venture out. He made his way with difficulty to the Louvre. 'I was utterly exhausted when I entered the lofty hall where the blessed goddess of Beauty stands on her pedestal. At her feet I lay a long time. I wept so passionately that a stone might have had compassion on me, therefore the goddess looked down compassionately, yet at the same time inconsolably, as though she would say, 'See you not that I have no arms, and that therefore I can give you no help?'

But Christ's compassion reaches to the bottom of our grief. His everlasting arms are under-

neath our brokenness. And he gives this consummate art to His disciples, even to the obscure who in quiet ways prove that the healing of the world is in its nameless saints, to whom and through whom He restores the music lost awhile and shows that :

Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.

4. And once more His skill penetrates to the deeper places. He heals the wounds of the soul. 'Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee' (Ps. xli. 4). This is the deepest wound of all, the worst malady. Here we can help one another least of all.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart ?

If thou couldst . . .
. . . find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again.

But the court physician had no cure. This disease, he said, was beyond his practice.

'Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel,' said Elisha, when Naaman failed to find a cure at the hand of the King. 'Bring him unto me' urged Jesus, when His disciples had no remedy for the afflicted child. Jehovah-Ropheka is able to save to the uttermost. He meets our fears and sorrows, perplexities and distresses with the joyful assurance of His power and the immediate experience of His peace.

Thy touch has still its ancient power ;
No word from Thee can fruitless fall :
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

PRAYER AND VICTORY

Exod. xvii. 11.—'And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed : and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.'

HERE is an unforgettable picture, Moses the man of God with uplifted hands upon the hill-top, while the armies of Israel and Amalek are locked in combat in the plain below ; and the battle sways to and fro according as the hands of prayer are firmly upheld or sink in weariness. A picture to teach Israel and the people of God in all ages that prayer is a mighty power in the day of battle and an essential condition without which victory cannot be won, or if won will prove unfruitful.

The occasion was specially significant as being the first battle that Israel fought and the result of which would have a decisive effect upon their morale. They were not a seasoned army but a mixed multitude of recently emancipated slaves. Not daring as yet to face the Philistines they had travelled by a round-about road, 'for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent

when they see war.' Here, then, was the critical moment when they needed above all to be strengthened and guided to enter on their career of conquest. In like circumstances Joshua, when he assumed the sole leadership and crossed the Jordan, received Divine encouragement and guidance. In both cases a special lesson was taught at the beginning which needed not afterwards to be so dramatically repeated. It was a lesson which the people of God need ever afresh to learn and keep in mind, the lesson namely, that spiritual forces take part and intervene decisively in the battle of life and their aid must be invoked with unwearying prayer. Let us see what light is here thrown upon this so vital subject that we may be led to a more firm and intelligent faith in the power of prayer, and may be encouraged to pray and not to faint.

1. Consider in the first place that *the sight of Moses praying on the hill-top infused spirit into the army of Israel*. Nothing is of more supreme value to an army than the spirit of the men. Napoleon said that victories were won 'two-thirds by the morale of the troops and one-third by the strategy of the generals.' And that is true. Everything depends on the spirit of the men. If their spirit fail the inevitable consequence is panic and disgraceful rout. This holds good in every form of enterprise and in the whole battle of life. Failure of spirit spells despair. It is like the breaking down of the main barrier, the collapse of the keystone, the surrender of the citadel. When the heart faints the hands hang down and the limbs fail because all the energies of the body are paralysed. It is of vital importance, therefore, that the spirit be upheld.

Now prayer is the great sustainer of men's spirits. This will hardly be denied, even by those who are doubtful of the power of prayer to effect changes in the material world. If there be a spiritual world at all surely spirit can influence spirit. And so it has been proved in human experience. In times of danger and in every extremity men have found it natural to pray and have confessed the sustaining power of prayer. 'I have been driven many times to my knees' said Abraham Lincoln, 'by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.' Men have also been greatly helped by the prayers of others. To know that they were being prayed for has often given their spirits a strange uplift when they were like to faint. How earnestly does St Paul entreat his friends to pray for him and how dependent does he feel himself to be upon their prayers. Even our Lord in Gethsemane sought the support of His disciples' prayers, though they failed Him so sadly. In our own time in the last world war our leaders at the front made like appeals. One remembers how Admiral Beattie, when in command of the Grand Fleet, sent home a message in which he declared his conviction that we should never win the victory we desired until the nation gave itself more earnestly to prayer. So in the present war on the opening day of its fifth year when our Eighth Army set foot on the continent of Europe it must have been an inspiration to its General and his men to know that while they fought the whole nation at the summons of the King was devoting the

day to prayer. They should never be left without that encouragement. Wherever they go, to all the ends of the earth, they should carry with them the firm assurance that they are followed and upheld by the nation's prayers.

2. Observe in the second place that *God was here teaching Israel to pray while they fought*, or in other words, to combine human effort with humble dependence on Divine help. There is no contradiction whatever between the two, however grossly their relation may have been misunderstood. Faith in God has often been taken to imply fatalism, and prayer has often been supposed to be a substitute for effort. It has been complacently said that whereas in former times men simply cried to God in their trouble we have learned to meet and master our troubles by our own skill and resource. When a pestilence broke out our fathers appointed a day of prayer, but we, grown wiser, flush the drains and take sanitary precautions. The suggested antithesis is mainly false. No doubt there have been those whose religion tended to fatalism. No doubt also in such a case as that of pestilence our forefathers, having no knowledge of its cause, felt themselves assailed by some dark, impalpable, demonic power against which they had no defence save in an appeal to God. But wherever they saw something that they could do, wherever there appeared an opening for human effort, they were as ready to work and fight as the most unbelieving modern. Is it not written in Scripture that the men of faith 'waxed valiant in fight'? And this is amply confirmed in human experience. When the Scots army kneeled to God before the battle of Bannockburn their prayers only put greater strength into their strong right arms. Oliver Cromwell, a man of action if ever there was one, has left his testimony that only when he gathered into his army men of faith, men who 'made a conscience of all they did,' was he uniformly victorious. And in the present war who would dare to say that the ardent faith and daily prayers of General Montgomery have benumbed his energies or weakened his activity? The gibe that 'religion is dope' is notoriously untrue, of the Christian religion at least. To depend on God, to ask His aid, to feel that we are in God's hand and on His side, to have the assurance that He that

is for us is more than all that can be against us, so far from tending to paralyse our energies is the greatest possible incentive to activity, courage, and endurance.

The supreme danger arises from quite another quarter. Man is so incorrigibly active and strong-headed and self-willed that he is continually in danger of leaving God out of account and of trusting entirely to an arm of flesh. He is all too apt to think that only material forces are of any account. Hence the sneering remark that 'God is on the side of the big battalions.' It was against this godless error that Israel had to be guarded. In this the first of all their battles they were taught not only to fight but to lift up their eyes to the hills from whence cometh help. They could see their venerable leader with uplifted hands and so they were reminded that spiritual forces were at work and conditioned the final result. Gideon was taught the same lesson when his army of thirty and two thousand was reduced to a mere three hundred, 'lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.' To Zerubabel also, struggling to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem, the same message came by way of encouragement, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' Because they never learnt this truth, because they trusted wholly in the 'arm of flesh,' and boasted, as Isaiah tells us, saying, 'By the strength of my hand I have done it,' therefore Divine judgment fell on the military empires of the old world, and proud and ancient Egypt together with brutal Assyria and Babylon, for all their big battalions, went down into the dust.

Never was there a time, surely, when this lesson more needed to be learnt and this warning taken to heart than in our own day. The big battalions trample over every land, and material forces of overwhelming magnitude have been harnessed to the chariot of war. In this frightful storm of fire and blood and iron, when truth and right are prostrate, when God is denied and mercy and love forgotten, it might seem as if nothing availed but ships and guns, tanks and aeroplanes. Yet is there a spirit in man which refuses to be crushed, a spark of the Divine which cannot be quenched. And therein lies the hope of the world. Time and again it has happened in history that some small people who had this Divine spark in them, who put their trust in God and for whom God had still a

purpose, resisted overwhelming forces with success and vindicated their right to live. Have we not seen in our own day how the mightiest military empire, advancing to conquer the world, was met by an uprising of the human spirit and repelled? And have we not the confident hope to-day that the same military power, in its second and more tremendous assault, after being brought to a halt on the very brink of victory, is now on the highway to final defeat? Our God is One who hath often 'put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.' Let us not forget that God is concerned in this great conflict, that spiritual forces are working under His command, and that the final word is His. Let us ever remember to take account of this, and while we stretch human energy and effort to their utmost, remember withal to

ask the aid of heavenly power
To help us in *this* evil hour.

3. Observe in the third place that *God granted victory to Israel in answer to prayer*. This is no disparagement to the valour of Joshua and his army. They were in this case the necessary human instruments. But 'the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' The issue of every battle is uncertain to human foresight. Therefore room must be left for the action of hidden influences working towards an unforeseen decision. As the ancient Greek poet Euripides is so fond of saying, 'God finds a way for the unexpected.' Now in the case before us, what difference was there between Israel and Amalek? They were sister tribes with a common ancestry. Why should God favour the one above the other? Was there any circumstance in the case, any excellence, any quality of character which, as the battle swayed in the balance, might have decisive weight with the Disposer of events? To that question there is an obvious answer. Yes, there was a decisive difference between these contending tribes, and we may call it faith or the prayer spirit in Israel. It is the same difference as appears between Jacob and his brother Esau. Esau, with whatever manly qualities he may have had, was 'a profane man,' that is a man to whom the spiritual world was unreal, to whom material forces, material gains, material enjoyments were everything.

Of such a man God could make nothing, for the birthright and the promise and the hope of the Kingdom of God were but a fairy tale to him. Jacob on the other hand, with all his faults, was a man of faith, a man who took account of God and believed that the promise given to Abraham was no vain thing. Of such a man something could be made, for his mind was open to heavenly influences and he could be serviceable to God's purpose of salvation for the world. The same was true of his descendants, the children of Israel. Bearing their father's name they had inherited something of his spirit. Rude as they were they had a knowledge of the true God and a dependence on Him which were wholly lacking in Amalek. And so they were destined to become what the prophet calls 'a polished shaft' in the hand of God, the instrument through which He would bring in His Kingdom for the redemption of mankind. In short, with Israel on that day of battle lay the hope of all nations. This great issue was hid from human eyes in the deep womb of the future, but it was already manifest to the Moral Ruler of the world and was the decisive factor in the event. Israel won the victory, not merely by their own valour but by the help and blessing of God. And that, not through favouritism, not for the preservation or glory of an insignificant Semitic tribe, but for the advancement of God's Kingdom, for the uplift and salvation of all mankind. Seen from high heaven it was no mere inter-tribal skirmish but a critical moment in the age-long battle between good and evil. Israel won through their dependence upon God. God was on their side because they were on God's side.

Now in the far mightier combat which shakes the world to-day what is there to choose between the combatants? Is there a difference which might appear to the eyes of a Holy God and be decisive when weighed in the scales of His eternal justice? Probably we should answer with conviction that there is. To us this war appears as a battle between right and might, between light and darkness, freedom and tyranny, civilization and barbarism. We can conceive no hopeful future for the nations if the enemy should win. And this conviction that we are fighting for the welfare of mankind is a great inspiration. Yet we must not judge our own cause too complacently. There are many forms of evil in the world. Perhaps the

rough and brutal man is not more hateful in the sight of God than the soft and sensual man. We read with horror tales of brutal outrage, but is it any less abhorrent in the sight of God to seduce with false professions of love or to buy body and soul with money? Of such iniquity there is far too much in our midst. And so we need to ask ourselves, are we worthy to win and to survive? Would our victory really be a victory for God's cause? If it delivered men from tyranny only to set them free to indulge their sinful lusts, if it merely substituted for the rigours of war a rotten peace it would have no moral value, nor be in any wise a victory for the Kingdom of God. The question is, as Abraham Lincoln once said, not whether God is on our side, but whether we are worthy to be on God's side. It becomes us to ask that question with all humility, and to realize and acknowledge that if in the mercy of God we are granted the victory it will be because God has some purpose of good to work out for us and through us, because He foresees that we can still be serviceable to His Kingdom.

After all, God is the Disposer of all events, and prayer, which is the outward expression of our dependence upon Him, is a decisive element in every case and in every conflict. 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.' So in this world conflict, on the issue of which so much depends, we must be mindful to pray and not to faint. We must pray for those who fight for us. We owe it to them, and failure here would be a sin. We can follow all their movements daily and even hourly. See that we follow them with incessant prayer. In memorable lines Arthur Clough reproaches those who fail:

It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

'But for you.' What a tragedy if the failure lay with us. The Germans have said that the last war was lost on the home front. We may doubt that, but one thing is not doubtful, that we on our part, by some failure on the spiritual front, lost the peace. Therefore we must pray also for our nation, that our public life may be made clean, our ideals ennobled, our energies directed so that we may be fitted to enter a new era of more devoted service to God and

man. And finally we must pray for all mankind, friend and foe alike. Surely it is manifest that only God can bring order out of the vast chaos of our time. The forces of evil are mighty and, if faith fail, they will yet prevail. Make no mistake about it, the battle against evil must go on to the end of time. And as Moses' hands were upheld till the going down of the sun, so must faith lift unwearied hands of prayer till the sun goes down on the long drama of human history, till the last battalions of evil are driven from the field, and the cause of God is finally triumphant.

J. H. MORRISON.

The First Commandment

Exod. xx. 3.—'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.'

THE Ten Commandments are among the earlier and not the more modern of the Old Testament records. They appear in a comparatively late book (the Book of Deuteronomy), but also in an earlier one (Exodus), and, though the later form is in certain particulars an improvement on the earlier, the Exodus version agrees with the Deuteronomic in the most remarkable and fundamental of its statements: 'I am the Lord thy God . . . thou shalt have no other gods before me.'

1. The First Commandment is not a formal declaration of the truth that there is but one God. This truth is formally asserted in several well-known passages in Deuteronomy, but it cannot be maintained that the Commandment which forbids the Jewish people to serve and worship any other god than the God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt required them to deny that other divinities exist. It may be said very fairly that the Commandment is consistent with the theory that every nation has its own god, on whose protection it can rely, and whose greatness it should honour. Jehovah was the national God of the Jews, and therefore the Commandment insists on His exclusive right to their service. Other races might worship other gods; the Jews were bound to serve Him.

In order to distinguish between things that differ, Comparative Religion has provided the

word Henotheism, which serves a very useful purpose, and accurately indicates what seems to some to have been a well-marked stage in the history of religion. Monotheism means that there is only one God for the whole universe, only one God whom all men should worship; Henotheism means nothing more than that the particular people whose beliefs and religious practices we are studying do as a matter of fact worship only one God, one God and not many gods, one God who is their God and whose Divine honours they will not suffer any of the gods of other nations to share. The Henotheist worships only one God, without saying or consciously thinking or definitely affirming that there is no other anywhere than the one he worships; the Monotheist not merely worships only one God, but believes and affirms that there is only one God to worship because only one God exists.

The Jewish nation, demoralized by tyranny, corrupted by idolatry, was in no condition yet to appreciate the moral and intellectual bearings of Monotheism, or to balance the claims of the forces of Nature, or even to see through the senselessness of fetishism; they had to be trained by stern and vigorous prohibition—they must have no other gods but Jehovah. This was the truest method of securing the ultimate triumph of Monotheism. If I withhold my service from any god, if I observe no ceremonies in his honour, if I never worship in his temples, if I abstain from any acknowledgment of his divine claims, he soon ceases to be a god to me. A religious dogma, true or false, perishes if it is not rooted in the religious affections and sustained by religious observances.

Generation after generation, amid all their frequent lapses into the Polytheism of surrounding nations, this people had held before them, as their duty and their privilege, the exclusive worship of the one only God, until through the practice they began to apprehend the theory. And then at last the Prophet of the Exile, lifting up his voice in the hearing of a wider world than that which any of his predecessors had addressed, could unroll the full truth which during all these ages had lain wrapt up in the words of the great Law-giver of the Desert, and could call aloud to the nations in the name of his God—'I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me'; 'Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens,

God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else'; 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.'

2. What does this First Commandment say to us to-day? Has it anything to say at all? We know that an idol is nothing in the world, that there is no God but one; and though there be that are called gods, yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. What need, then, to proclaim in our ears to-day, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'?

But are these things really so? 'What means it,' asks Martin Luther, 'to have a God?' and replies, 'Whatever thy heart clings to and relies upon, that is properly thy God.' And it is just here that we moderns find ourselves in peril of the old Polytheism against which this First Commandment is a solemn warning.

Our danger of breaking the Commandment is twofold. There is, first, the danger of practical Polytheism and, second, the danger of practical Atheism.

(1) *Practical Polytheism* is still with us as a solvent of the unity of the moral and spiritual life. If God is one so should the life of the worshipper be one, dominated throughout by His law, and seeking only those things that are pleasing in His sight. But, contrary to this principle of unity, religious people are making compromises every day between God and the world, between the spirit and the flesh, between duty and inclination, between the present life and the life to come. A human life ought to be the temple of the one God; but men and women who acknowledge this in their creed and give expression to it in their weekly worship, systematically leave the presence of the one God to make a very pantheon of their lives, admitting now one and now another deity, often as conflicting as the diverse altars of the olden time when Polytheism was in flower.

'Daily within our lives,' writes Dr Fosdick, 'many altars smoke with sacrifice to many gods. We adore our homes; we would give our lives for them. We do not talk about the Penates, the ancient Roman deities of hearth and household, but psychologically we worship them. We are devoted to our vocations, in

letters, in art, in science. We do not talk about the Muses, goddesses of science and the fine arts, but psychologically we serve them. We are devoted to social betterment and for it many a fine life is spent in unstinted zeal. We do not make our vows to some demi-god, Prometheus, who at the cost of unutterable sacrifice dared steal the sacred fire from heaven to warm the hearths of men, but psychologically we serve Prometheus. And many serve Bacchus or Mars or Venus or Apollo, the god of physical beauty, or Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Indeed, how many try to serve a mixed medley of these gods, the Penates and Venus, Apollo and Bacchus, Prometheus and Mars! What a polytheistic mess of incoherent gods the typical living of millions of us reveals, although this is the twentieth century!'

Nations are tempted to make an idol of material prosperity, of force, or of military glory. 'Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses'—a sentence as true to-day as when it was first written by the Psalmist. Individuals deliberately set before themselves pleasure as their chief good, or even mere physical strength and prowess. And if they have no such gods outside themselves to worship then they become their own god.

¶ Bishop Wilson, in his *Maxims*, writes: 'There are few who have not their idols which their hearts adore, in which they put their trust and place their happiness. The worst of all is ourselves.'

O doom beyond the saddest guess,
As the long years of God unroll
To make thy dreary selfishness
The prison of a soul!

(2) Not only do the words of the Commandment strike at our modern Polytheism; they also discover and rebuke a still deeper depth of our modern life, its *practical Atheism*. Intellectually, and in words, most men will acknowledge a First Cause; but, in fact, multitudes leave Him out of their calculations. In all departments of life, by numbers of men and women, God is practically put out of court. He is not reckoned with; He is not denied, but He is ignored.

We confess in our creed His majesty and greatness as the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, of angels and of men, but the confession

is a tradition, not the expression of a real and living faith. There is no devout awe in His presence. When we are professing to worship Him our hearts are not hushed with reverence, and there is no fire or rapture in our praise. When we sin grossly we are stung with self-reproach and humiliated by the loss of self-respect, but we do not fear His anger. The hope of winning His approbation is not an active and energetic motive to doing right. Are not many of us conscious that if we lost God from our creed no element of joy or terror would be lost to our life? Would not the whole current of thought and passion run in its old channels? Would not our sorrows be the same, our hopes and our fears? Would not the sunlight and the darkness be the same as before? It is sometimes said in grim joke that our countrymen leave the Ten Commandments behind them at Suez. We do not need to go so far away as Suez to do that. We can do it at home by simply forgetting God.

¶ 'The older I grow,' wrote Carlyle in 1876, 'and I am now on the brink of eternity, the more comes back to me the first sentence of the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."'

3. The main implication of this Commandment is the claim of God upon the entire devotion of men. He demands undivided allegiance, exclusive regard. The Divine jealousy will not brook rivalry. God cannot consort with idols.

The First Commandment comes to us charged with that significance which only the earthly life of the Son of God could impart to it. The great and First Commandment is 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' Jesus stands outside the door till He has full entrance and undivided possession. He must have a regal place or none at all. He can accept only the throne of the heart. The early Christians would have been tolerated by Rome if they would have been content to allow their Saviour to have a place in the Pantheon among the other pagan deities. But about this there could be no compromise. Such love as His demands complete love and loyalty in return. His religion cannot be a matter of preference,

it must be a passion. He will not receive half-hearted disciples, with one eye on the Kingdom and another back to the world. 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' It is because His love is infinite that it comes with such infinite claims. It is to insult Him to offer a little bit of our hearts, to present a scant measure of love to Him who has poured such full measure into our cup of life, who has loved us and given Himself for us. He will not compete with our idols. The Saviour must be King, or He cannot even be Saviour. There is no safety for us till we love Him with all our heart and all our mind and all our soul.

Lord! take mine heart! O first and fairest,
Whom all creation's ends shall hear;
Who deathless love in death declarest!
None else is beauteous—famous—dear!¹

The Second Commandment

Exod. xx. 4, 5.—'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.'

How is this Second Commandment related to, and how does it differ from, the First? To many the distinction is by no means obvious. More than once it has been said—Are not the two Commandments really one? 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'—that forbids idolatry. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them'—what is this but the prohibition of idolatry over again?

But this word 'idolatry' has two quite distinct meanings. Sometimes it signifies the worship of false gods; and when men bow down to the sun, the moon, or the stars, we call them 'idolaters.' That is the sin which is forbidden by the First Commandment. But that is not the only meaning of the term. We speak of the 'idolatry' of the children of Israel, when in the wilderness they worshipped

¹ E. B. Browning.

the golden calf which Aaron made for them. Yet they had not broken the First Commandment; the calf was not to them in the place of God; it was meant merely as the symbol of the unseen Jehovah. We are distinctly told that when the image was made, Aaron 'made a proclamation and said, To-morrow shall be a feast to the Lord.' Why then was God angry with the children of Israel, and why did He visit them with such sore punishment? Because they had worshipped the true God under a false and forbidden form: they had kept the First, but they had broken the Second Commandment.

It is obvious that the two offences are closely allied, a breach of the Second Commandment readily preparing the way for disobedience to the First. Nevertheless the distinction is clear: the First Commandment declares *whom* we shall worship, the Second, *how*; the First says Jehovah must be worshipped *exclusively*, the Second that He must be worshipped *spiritually*; the First stands for the *unity*, the Second for the *spirituality* of God. The Second Commandment is, indeed, an early form of the great truth afterwards published by Jesus Christ: 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship in spirit and truth.'

God! What God is this?

What is His shape and substance?

He hath none;

He is a spirit dwelling in the heart,

Moulding it to His likeness. Very near,

Yet far to seek, He dwells beyond the sun,

Beyond the utmost limit of the sea,

And yet His kingdom is the heart of man.¹

1. What is the primary meaning of the Second Commandment? Did it forbid the arts of painting and sculpture? So it has been sometimes understood, and the absence of works of art among the Jewish people has been pointed to in proof. It may be readily granted that the Jews were not an artistic race; in that respect they stand in striking contrast to the great nations by which they were surrounded. It may also be admitted that, whatever artistic instincts they may have possessed were in some degree checked by this Commandment, as a similar interdiction in the Koran is said to have produced a like effect among the Arab tribes. On the other hand, let it be remembered that

if the Hebrews contributed little to art, it was in the main because their whole strength was devoted to higher and greater interests. In the Divine economy of nations, if Greece stands for art, and Rome for law, it is to Judæa that we look as the birthplace and home of religion.

At the same time, a fair interpretation of all the facts lends little support to the idea that this Commandment was understood by the Jews as an absolute prohibition of the creative and plastic arts. The prohibition of images and pictures in the Old Testament was for a specific purpose. This Second Commandment refers only to worship. 'Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them.' The making of images for art and adornment is not prohibited. Even in the imageless Temple there were artistic representations of animals, for example the brazen bull that held up the brazen laver, and the architectural ornamentation of the building. The brazen serpent was only destroyed when the superstitious began to *worship* it. There is no implication even that the use of art is necessarily hurtful in worship. As a matter of fact there was art in Old Testament worship, a high development of it in some of its branches, in ritual, in music. Hebrew religion which used architecture, poetry, music, cannot be said to have refused the use of art to express itself. We have to consider the specific purpose of the particular condemnation of the Second Commandment; and that finds sufficient justification in the loathly idolatries and degraded Nature-worship of the surrounding Canaanite nations.

2. But sometimes when the objection is stated about the opposition of religion to art, the emphasis is laid not on the Old Testament position, but on that of the Early Christian Church. Quotations can be made from the Early Fathers which show that they looked on art with a suspicious eye. Tertullian wrote a tract against the painter Hermogenes. But it has to be remembered that the Early Church was in precisely similar situation to that of the Jews. They lived among peoples where pagan art meant idolatry, and in times of persecution, when the very life of the faith was at stake, men had sterner things to think of than carving and painting. But from the earliest days of the Church we see from casual references, and later on from what remains in the Roman catacombs and early sarcophagi, that **there was**

¹ Mrs Percy Dearmer in *The Dreamer*.

in the minds of Christians no impassable gulf fixed between their faith and art, except the same prohibition that art must not be used for idolatrous purposes.

¶ Religion cannot dispense with 'imagination,' and there is no difference of *principle* in the vivid imagination of God as the Ancient of days, or of Jesus Christ amongst the golden candlesticks, and the statue or picture which embodies such imagination, without being identified with deity. As a matter of fact, the Orthodox Church differs from the usage of the Catholic by employing pictures and rejecting solid statues, whilst the Protestant nowadays often accepts a cross where he would repudiate a crucifix. Many reverent Protestants would sympathize with Sir Thomas Browne's words: 'At the sight of a Crosse or Crucifix I can dispence with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour. . . . I could never heare the *Ave Marie* Bell without an elevation . . . whilst therefore they directed their devotions to her, I offered mine to God.'¹

As to the actual place which art should receive from us in our public worship, that must be settled as a practical question, as to how far it serves the true purpose of worship. It is quite a legitimate position for a man, who loves both art and religion, to say that a highly developed art, ornate and sensuous, is too dangerous for the Church to encourage; to say, as a great historian declared, that art stood to religion like stained glass in a Cathedral, it dims the light while beautifying it. 'The longer I live,' says Ruskin, 'the more I incline to severe judgment in this matter, and the less I can trust the sentiments excited by painted glass and coloured tiles.' There is always a Puritan heart to all spiritual religion, not the puritanism of ignorance and bigotry, but the puritanism of the word, 'Thou shalt not bow down to them nor serve them.'

The Second Commandment still remains true. God is spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. But if we are Christ's, if we have given our hearts and lives to Him, if our chief desire is to know God's will and to do it, we can use every noble work of art for delight, for instruction, and praise God anew for the beauty of His world, and for the many things good and true and pure and beautiful and of good report.

¹ H. Wheeler Robinson.

¶ Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair*, makes Major Dobbin say, 'that for his part, every beauty of art and Nature made him thankful as well as happy, and that the pleasure to be had in listening to fine music, as in looking at the stars in the sky or at a beautiful landscape or picture, was a benefit for which we might thank Heaven as sincerely as for any other worldly blessing.'

To the believing mind the world is essentially a beautiful world. Sin alone is the distorting, chaotic element which ruins the beauty. When we know God and love God, we see that He has made all things beautiful in His time; and we see that art can be, nay is, the ally of religion in its warfare against materialism, whether it be in the speculative region, which would limit the human mind to exclusively scientific methods, or in the practical materialism, which makes the money market the test of all things. Art, not in any narrow sense, is the handmaid of religion. As Michelangelo says, 'True painting is only an image of God's perfection, a shadow of the pencil with which He paints, a melody, a striving after harmony.' Yes, and if we have harmony of soul with our Heavenly Father, if we are reconciled to God in heart, all things will speak of Him, His power and wisdom and ineffable love. All things are ours, since we are Christ's and Christ is God's.

Love and Jealousy

Exod. xx. 5.—'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.'

'THE Lord thy God is a jealous God' is a phrase which occurs frequently in the Old Testament, and is familiar to us all from its presence in the Second Commandment; but what does it mean? What picture should be before our eyes when we say that Jehovah is a jealous God?

1. At first, the words seem to have a pagan ring about them, and to show marks of an element common to all the religions of antiquity, for the jealousy of the gods was a conviction widely spread in the ancient world. Yet the Jewish 'jealousy' was as different as possible from the pagan, and betokens a completely different conception of the Divine character. To the pagan the gods were jealous of man's

prosperity and happiness; from their not far distant retreat among the clouds they were pictured as watching with unfriendly eyes any mere man who was getting awkwardly rich or powerful or happy; they did not like to see a human being climbing so high and getting so near to their own privileged position; he was presuming, approaching them too closely, and it was time he was put in his place—indeed punished with dramatic severity. And this led to a certain fear in the pagan world of great prosperity or happiness; the pendulum would soon swing back and the success give way to failure.

The Old Testament message that Jehovah is a jealous God has nothing in common with this pagan conception of divine envy. Jehovah is never regarded as envious of the prosperity of His creatures. 'Blessed be the Lord who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant,' is the cry of the Psalmist. Certainly those sudden reverses of fortune which impressed the pagan dramatists, also impressed the Jew; he, too, saw in them not mere chance but the finger of God; and he also viewed them with complacency. But that was because the rich, prosperous man was too often the tyrant, or the cheat; one who had oppressed the poor and robbed the hireling of his wages; and so the righteous man must rejoice to see him punished; He hath put down the mighty from their seat, but also hath exalted the humble and meek; and even the punishment is to have its effect on the sinner and make him realize that there is a God in Israel who rules unto the ends of the world.

2. What, then, is meant by this constant assertion that the Lord our God is a jealous God? The Old Testament is employing here a very human metaphor to express a fundamental truth as to the Divine character. The connexion between Jehovah and His chosen people, Israel, is frequently treated in the Old Testament as parallel with the relation between husband and wife. Jehovah has rescued Israel out of the hands of those who oppressed her, has taken her to be His own, has betrothed her to Himself; and this because He loves her. And Israel, therefore, is bound to Him by the ties of gratitude as well as of love; unfaithfulness to Him rouses not sorrow but anger, for He is jealous.

And love, if it be intense, is bound to be jealous; love gives and sacrifices all, but it demands all; it asks for the whole heart; the answering love is a duty: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.' 'The Lord is a jealous God,' is therefore the reverse side of the inscription 'The Lord is a loving God'; love and jealousy are inseparable, the one is the shadow of the other.

¶ Jealousy, at any rate, is one of the consequences of love; you may like it or not, at pleasure, but there it is.¹

¶ Jealousy is hardly ever spoken of outside the Scriptures in an ethically justifiable sense; for it is frequently so unfounded, it tends to be suspicious where there is really no cause, and when aroused it poisons the outlook and leads to domestic misery and sometimes to crime. But does that necessitate the judgment that there is no such thing as a *pure* jealousy, that there is no type of love in human life which has a right to be jealous, that is to say a love which resents being shared? When jealousy is aroused it often does vent itself in most unpleasant ways; it seems to link every hideous passion in its train; as the great Scriptural love-lyric itself affirms, it is as cruel as the grave. Yes; but is it wrong for any human being to demand from another a love which shall yield everything and which may not be shared by any other individual? The institution of monogamy is the altogether sufficient answer to that.²

That the Lord our God is a jealous God is abundantly evident in Jesus Christ. That is something that we are apt to overlook. As we recall how Jesus walked in mercy we lift up our hearts assured that God is merciful. As we remember His compassion for the fallen we are filled with the certainty that God is love. But no one can read the story of the Gospels, believing that God was incarnate in humanity, without recognizing the truth that the Lord our God is a jealous God. Jesus demanded a love which should take precedence of any natural relationship; He laid down the condition even of discipleship as one of entire renunciation, you could not learn His doctrine if you had not first given up every other thing. Even had we never learned from the Old Testament that there was such a thing as Divine

¹ R. L. Stevenson.

² W. E. Orchard.

jealousy we should have to conclude it from the life of Jesus. It is more plainly written in the Incarnate Word than in any reason annexed to the Commandment.

¶ Once when I was a lad a man said to me, jeeringly, 'Your Bible is not true to itself: it says that God is love, and it says that He is a jealous God—how can He be both?' and I had no means of answering him. But now I know that God could not be a jealous God if He were not a loving God; His jealousy is a measure of His love. Never could He speak thus to me if He were indifferent to me, if it were a matter of no concern to Him whether I served Him or not. And when I read these old, old words, instead of the face of an angry Deity, breathing forth threatenings and wrath, which is all that some men see, there meets me a Face all aglow with love, and eyes that hunger for my love.¹

3. This deep thought of the jealousy of God has been powerfully influential in two ways. It has, in the first place, given tremendous impulse to the vital doctrine of Monotheism. It has been of supreme importance to the race to learn the lesson that God is one. All spiritual progress has depended on it; all true knowledge has depended on it. And that great doctrine, so vital to humanity, has been tremendously deepened in appeal by the truth that rang out on the ear of Israel, 'The Lord thy God is a jealous God.' The first thing that had to be impressed on men was that the worship of many gods was quite intolerable. They must be taught that for reasons yet unknown to them it was infinitely offensive to Jehovah. And it was taught, sublimely and yet simply, to men who as yet were spiritually children, by the ascription of jealousy to God. It is not easy for us to-day to appreciate the attraction of Polytheism. Yet every reader of the Old Testament knows how tremendous were its attractions to the Jew. And if the office and calling of the Jews was to give to humanity the truth that God is one, do we not see that some mighty thought was needed to keep them true to their spiritual leading? That mighty thought was the jealousy of God: 'The Lord thy God is a jealous God.' It burned itself into the heart of Israel that God would tolerate no rival claim. And thus, not without many a lapse, was the

¹ George Jackson.

world led to that profound conviction, without which there is no unity or peace.

That thought, again, has been very powerful in making ready for the Incarnation. It is really the herald—the strange and shadowy herald—of the love that has been revealed in Jesus Christ. A jealous God may be a dark conception, but a jealous God can never be indifferent. When love is jealous it may do cruel deeds, but at least it is a love intense and passionate. And so in the Old Testament we never find a God who does not care. He loves with a love so burning and intense that He is passionately jealous for His people. 'He who toucheth you,' he cries to them, 'toucheth the apple of mine eye.' And it was that great love, purged of its grosser elements, and shown in a beauty that man had never dreamed of, that was at last revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The jealousy of God is simply the sign of the purity, the supremacy, the unselfishness of His love; for His love is man's one need; it is set upon us with a passion we can but faintly understand, and it is utterly and solely moved by concern for the eternal happiness of man's immortal personality.

An Inheritance of Blessing

Exod. xx. 5, 6. — 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.'

THE assertion of a Divine jealousy is but one difficulty of this remarkable verse. The Lord goes on to describe Himself as 'visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.' These words have been often misunderstood, and sometimes grossly caricatured. Men have read in them the unreasoning anger of an incensed monarch, the vengeance of a vindictive Deity. But in this they were wrong. The truth is that apostasy and idolatry, like all other evils, bring their own punishments in the form of inevitable consequences.

1. It is not only religion, but science also, which proclaims that the sins of the fathers

are visited upon the children even to the third and the fourth generations, and that no man's transgression affects himself alone but has far-reaching consequences affecting many others. Sins of the flesh are visited upon the bodily system. Sins of the temper are as truly handed down from father to son as is—let us say—the tendency to over-indulgence in strong drink. The moral struggle of each man that is born into the world is made harder for him by each failure to resist sin on the part of those who went before him. Tell us a man's pedigree, and we will tell you—so say our scientific prophets—to what kind of sin he is likely to fall a victim. The saying had immediate application to the consequences of idolatry in the history of Israel, and was a forecast of their future. But it is true always and everywhere.

¶ In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne, with rare art, pictures the shadow of the past as constantly hanging, like a baneful cloud, over the heads of his figures; and every detail, even the minutest, is made to point backwards to the weary past from which it has derived its constitutional peculiarities. Even the little shop which 'old maid Pyncheon' reopens in the dark old house is not new. A miserly ancestor of the family had opened it a century before, who is supposed to haunt it, and the scales are rusty with the rust of generations. The half-effaced picture of the ancestral Pyncheon which hangs on the walls, the garden-mould black with the vegetable decay of centuries, the exhausted breed of aristocratic fowls which inhabit the garden—every touch is studied to condense the dark past into a cloud hanging over the living present, and make the reader feel its malign influence.¹

2. When men speak of the law of heredity, it is this that they generally have in their minds, the transmitted tendency to evil. And so they speak of it with bated breath as a sad law, as if it presented some special obstacle to our belief in a Benevolent Will overruling the affairs of the world and ordering the life of men; they allege it as an excuse for sin. But is this, then, the whole teaching of history or of science or of the Bible as to heredity? Certainly the Jew did not think so; we shall find, if we examine his statement of the law, that it has another aspect which we are neglecting. 'Visiting the

sins of the fathers upon the children?' Is that all? No; for He shows 'mercy unto thousands of them that love Him and keep His Commandments.'

That evil propagates itself is true; but in each succeeding generation its influence becomes less and less harmful. The curse is to the third and fourth generation. Good, on the other hand, increases in power and in fertility as it is handed on from one to another in the march of the race. The light of a noble example burns brightly and with steady flame for centuries, while the glamour of an evil notoriety fades and flickers away into the darkness. And in the transmission of acquired faculty, it is not too much to say—though we may frankly confess for the present our ignorance as to its precise mode and measure—that the disciplined and hardly won powers of each generation become the congenital endowments of the next. Inherited truthfulness, inherited purity, an inherited sense of honour—we have all seen them at work, having gained strength and stability as they are passed from father to son.

¶ Perhaps one is a little apt to forget that the hereditary relation is even-handed. It is for better as well as for worse. It secures the entailment of all manner of wholesome human qualities. Nay more, when we take a broad view, it is more than even-handed, for there is more likelihood of the hereditary entailment of the stable, the harmonious, and the integrative. The dice are loaded in our favour.¹

¶ When Shakespeare said 'The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones,' he made one of his few, but one of his gravest mis-statements. Good is never so interred. Good is not only more potent than evil, it is longer lived. It is the property of evil that it burns itself out quickly. The law of moral sanitation is against it, and determinedly seeks to destroy it. But good descends and multiplies, and its presence is long upon the earth.²

There is no province of human life in which we are not reaping golden harvests which were sown for us by men of other generations. They cleared the forests and drained the marshes; ours are the rich pastures and the fenced corn-fields. Our just laws and the political institutions which secure the freedom and order of the State are not our own work; we owe them

¹ R. H. Hutton, *Literary Essays*, 448.

¹ J. Arthur Thomson, *The Control of Life*, 119.

² James Burns, *Laws of the Upward Life*, 107.

to the courage, the sagacity, and the heroic endurance of a long succession of obscure as well as illustrious ancestors. Our fathers have created for us a wealthy literature. Even those broad and simple principles of morality which, to us, carry with them their own evidence of authority and obligation, would have been unknown to us but for the virtue of preceding generations. It was not in our boyhood or even in our infancy that the education began by which we have been trained to habits of industry, truthfulness, honesty, and self-control. Whatever virtue exists in Britain to-day has come from the moral discipline of many centuries.

We cannot choose the good, and leave the bad, perpetuating the one and annihilating the other. Every man must enter upon the whole of his inheritance, the bad as well as the good. It may seem hard that the iniquity of the fathers should be visited upon the children, yet when we remember that this is so by virtue of a principle which alone secures the growing welfare of the race, all idea of injustice vanishes. The law which underlies this great sanction of the Second Commandment, rightly understood, is the merciful provision of a good and wise God, who, through all man's sin and folly, is ever seeking to lead him to higher and higher levels of goodness and truth.

3. Our responsibility, then, is clear. Here is our heritage. What are we going to make of it? How shall it be with those who come after us? What will they think of us and of our influence upon their common life?

Let every man be sure of this, that if he has yielded to the lower life and has let down his ideals, he is adding to the difficulty of the lives that shall follow his in the natural line. When a man puts a strain of bad blood into the generation of which he is part he is mortgaging the future generations. The Second Commandment has this for its note of warning. Lower your ideal of God and you endanger future generations. Cheapen your own thought of piety, make little of it, and you start your coming generations towards ungodliness and impiety.

But the law has the other side. The cure for much of the evil of the present day is past our power. It is in the blood from the wrongs of generations ago. The hope of the world is a

constant infusion of good blood from those who are seeking to bring righteousness to pass. Every man who keeps his life up to the high level serves not only his own day and generation, but the generations yet to be as well. And the largest element in the strong character that is needed will be a true devotion to eternal things, to God and righteousness.

The Third Commandment

Exod. xx. 7.—‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.’

‘THOU shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain’; that is to say, not the ‘name’ simply, but all that the name connotes and reveals; the character and being of Him who took it, that thereby He might make Himself known, are to be held in reverence. The basal idea of the Commandment is well put by A. B. Davidson. ‘Among the Hebrews . . . a name was never a mere distinguishing sign, it always remained descriptive; it expressed the meaning of the person or thing designated. The name bore the same relation to the significance of the person or thing as a word does to a thought.’ How many lights flash round this truth, that name equals character, character revealed and expressed! ‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ God’s character, that means, is something to worship, to trust, to take refuge in, to be served utterly. ‘Hallowed be thy name’ is Plank One in Jesus’ model prayer; ‘Glorify thy name’ our Lord’s cry out of a sorely troubled soul. To ‘proclaim the name’ is highest honour: to ‘profane the name’ is to choose moral death: to ‘blaspheme the name’ is the eternal infamy. ‘My name is in him’ has its perfect application to Jesus, just as Jesus’ perfect achievement is given in ‘I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.’

1. This Commandment was intended in the first place as a safeguard for the sanctity of oaths. And it is worthy of note that, so emphatic is the testimony which this ancient code bears to the cardinal virtue of truthfulness, the sin of false swearing is condemned both

by the Ninth and Third Commandments. There it is forbidden as a crime against man, here as a sin against the Most High God.

Human society—the relations of man to man in government, trade, friendship, the home—rests upon mutual confidence; and there cannot be trust where there is not truthfulness. Religion is the foundation of society in the sense that men's connexion with God binds them to each other; their fear to lie to Him prevents them from lying to their neighbours, at least in those instances where they deliberately invoke His name. And in a world of lies it is of incalculable value that there should be some circumstances under which one can be certain that men are speaking verity. In the light of the present awful conflict, of what worth it would have been to have had the name of a God men genuinely feared taken to guarantee treaties solemnly sworn!

The social value of this ancient Commandment is entirely apparent; and we still administer oaths to witnesses in court, to officials entering upon public office, and to citizens taking up their responsibilities under the State. But Jesus said in reference to this Commandment: 'Swear not at all; but let your speech be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; and whatsoever is more than these is of evil.' If we take oaths upon some occasions, we imply that on other occasions we may not be speaking the truth. No one ought to need to say of a Christian: 'I would believe him under oath.' It is better, to be sure, that we should be able to believe a man under oath, than not to be able to believe him under any circumstances; but a Christian ought to be invariably trustworthy. His bare word should be entirely sufficient; his Yes is yes, his No, no.

His nay was nay without recall;

His yea was yea, and powerful all;

He gave his yea with careful heed,

His thoughts and words were well agreed;
His word, his bond and seal.¹

¶ The Friends, as is well known, regard these words as an absolute prohibition of all oaths under any circumstances whatever. Ideally, in this as in other matters, the Quaker is right. His is the goal towards which Christ is pointing us; and when human society is reconstructed on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, and

a man's word is his bond, the oath will be a meaningless form, because it will be impossible to add to the sacredness of the obligations of truth.

2. This Commandment is often quoted in connexion with another kind of swearing—profanity. To use God's name lightly, to curse and swear, is no mark of manliness or courage. It takes no brains whatever to swear. Profanity is rather the sign of an impoverished vocabulary and impoverished thought. Lord Byron remarked of an acquaintance: 'He knew not what to say, and so he swore.' And we are told of Laurence Oliphant's father that he 'got into the way of using bad words for want of something to say.'

¶ I travelled one day with a young naval officer—a charming youngster. He said 'bloody' fifty times in seven minutes, because after getting a little tired of the word I timed him. I said to him, 'Do you know you have said "bloody" fifty times in seven minutes? It is not that I am shocked, only that I am terribly bored.' He said, 'My God, have I?'¹

3. It is possible for us to take the name of God in vain in other ways than by profane speech, and it is here that the deepest application of the Commandment grips to-day. That it forbids false oaths may not stir very much for most of us. That it forbids profane swearing may only remind us of the biting remark that so long as such swearing was merely wrong it persisted; when it became unfashionable it vanished. It is rather irreverence in worship that we need forbidden to-day. Prayer is absolutely worthless in the sight of God if it be not sincere prayer. If insincerity of speech is fatal to all real intercourse with our fellow-men, it is still more fatal to communion with God. It is bad enough to say to a man what we do not mean, or to pretend to feelings we do not possess, but it is infinitely worse to insult our Maker by seeming to approach Him in prayer, while our hearts are far from Him.

¶ If we hear a man swear in the streets, we think it very wrong, and say he 'takes God's name in vain.' But there's a twenty-times worse way of taking His name in vain than that. It is to ask God for what we don't want. He doesn't like that sort of prayer. If you

¹ Inscription on Baron Stein's Tomb.

¹ H. R. L. Sheppard.

don't want a thing, don't ask for it: such asking is the worst mockery of your King you can insult Him with; the soldiers striking Him on the head with the reed was nothing to that. If you do not wish for His kingdom, don't pray for it.¹

There is a false and shocking familiarity in referring to the Incarnate God; there is the spirit of those who (never really worshipping) consider it a favour to come to church service, and lounge and weary in it, instead of becoming humbled and thrilled and hushed of spirit. We need to remember, 'There is not in the world any human assembly so august as a congregation met to worship God.'

Our worship still needs what is suggested by our Lord's so spontaneous words as He knelt—'Holy Father.' Ceremony and sacrament can be made to appeal to much in us Jesus does not value highly. Prayers of great beauty may be recited by people not really praying. Brilliant preachers can come so to weary folk whose souls are not wholly dead that such folk hunger increasingly for quiet, unexciting fellowship in real worship. They crave the reality of a great and moving reverence, crave to prove it that He does not leave unvisited or unblessed those who so take that peerless Name. It is such living experience of God and of His grace that teaches a man to 'walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' Whatever such a man's share of rank, riches, or this world's learning, he moves through life in the unconscious dignity of one crowned, crowned with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies.

The Fourth Commandment

Exod. xx. 8.—'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.'

1. THE Fourth Commandment is a natural consequent of those that come before. It demands what we may call a close-time every week, for the cultivation of that relationship with God which is enjoined in the other three. It is designed to prevent, for one day a week, the intrusion of those material interests and concerns which are in constant competition with the interests of the religious life. It is in this

¹ Ruskin.

way the Commandment is to be regarded, and not merely as a system of artificial taboos.

It ought to be noted also that this Fourth Commandment, apart from its provision for religious opportunity, is a humanitarian provision of the first importance. No one can fully realize what benefits it has brought in its train. In these days, when the necessity of leisure from the burden of toil is recognized as never before and is regarded as the birth-right of all, it should never be forgotten that the gift of leisure on Sunday was originally the gift of religion. However people may smile at the ancient enactment, it is the charter of their weekly liberty. The Commandment is not a mere dry, forbidding, legal enactment. It breathes the spirit of human compassion. On that day the slave is to be free, and not only he, but the ox and the ass are to have their day of rest. It is not only man's spiritual nature that demands the Sunday, but man's physical nature as well. Religion at its best has always been the guardian of the true life of man.

¶ The Puritans prohibited both work and play on the Day of Rest. We are apt to suppose that they only prohibited play and, as a result, we are not sufficiently grateful to them. But they did a great deal in suppressing work as well, as is shown by the fact that the anti-Puritan government of Elizabeth deliberately encouraged work, buying and selling on Sundays as well as on weekdays. The modern week-end who laughs at Sabbatarianism has the Sabbatarian to thank for his week-end and freedom.¹

¶ Keir Hardie used to tell how he once marched through the streets of a town in Belgium, with a huge procession of Belgian trade unionists, carrying a banner inscribed with the words, 'We demand the English Sunday. The workers' day of rest.'

2. The question that the Fourth Commandment raises is how precisely Sunday, which is our substitute for the Jewish Sabbath, should be spent, if it is to be religiously used. The question arises, of course, only for Christian people. This ought to be clearly realized. If a man is not seeking the highest, the question of what is right or wrong on Sunday has little relevance, for he does not admit the principle by which these may be determined. But when we come

¹ Adam Philip, *Helping Together*, 38.

to ask how Sunday should be spent, we find little positive help in this Commandment. The Jews, in their attempt to keep the letter of it, framed regulations which broke it in the spirit. Jesus Himself deliberately disregarded some of these regulations. When His disciples were hungry, He gathered ears of corn and used them for food, which was forbidden by the code. On the Sabbath also He found a lame man in the Temple and healed him. When an outcry was raised that He had profaned the Sabbath, He retorted in a principle that delivers us for ever from the tyranny of mere regulations that enjoin what we shall or shall not do on the Sunday. 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' This was but the extension of His method with all the Jewish laws—the substitution of a principle and a spirit, by which we may find our own way, for regulations that must be mechanically obeyed.

(1) The Sabbath is for man. But for what kind of man? That is the point. Is it for man as a physical being? Is it for man regarded from the side of his health or his pleasures? The physical side is undoubtedly a factor. Man is a spiritual being, but the physical is part of his nature. One necessity of a complete life is health of body. Jesus never glorified sickness, or taught that an unhealthy body is something which does not matter. A man cannot live a full life whose body is starved for want of fresh air and sunshine. It was to heal a sick man that He broke the Sabbath according to Jewish ideas, and it was the needs of the body that made Him pluck the ears of corn and feed the hunger of His disciples.

From this point of view Christ would permit all Sunday labour which is vital for health or food. If it is expedient or necessary for the promotion of personal or national welfare and enlightenment, and if it does not mean the elimination or crowding out of the proper response to Sunday, then there would seem to be no barrier to Sunday work. In war-time it is vital that the factory should work seven days of the week; in a season of bad weather that the harvest should be gathered in. These cases are different from that of the vested interest which employs Sunday labour to increase its own dividends.

How much of Sunday may be given to physical recreation is a question that each must decide for himself. The whole movement of

our time is towards greater leisure for such recreations during the week. No one can deny the fact that many of the people who play games on Sunday, for instance, have time enough through the week to give these things a legitimate place, which is all they are entitled to. Nothing needs so much husbandry as our time; and a more spiritual outlook on life would tend more and more so to apportion time that the Sunday would not need to be stolen from its higher uses for the purpose of mere physical recreation. It is to be noted also that many of our so-called recreations are not recreations at all, but dissipations. They neither tone up the mind nor brace the spirit. They only provide an escape from one material world into another, and that often less elevating.

(2) But the deepest truth of man's being is that he is spiritual. He is a spirit, and his soul is the root of all that is fine in his life. We cannot keep a world even healthy in body without the health of the spirit, any more than we can keep a plant healthy where we do not care for the roots. It is in the quality of our souls that we are most of all deficient. A business cannot be run without soul, though many may try. Business men will admit that many of their worst troubles are due to the lack of honesty, trust, and faithfulness—the things that depend on the quality of the inner life. If we think of our industrial life, it is the soul which is defective there. How are we to get the new world for which we long? Only as men are changed within, can the world be renewed without. The world to-day is in the condition in which it is, because it is bankrupt of spiritual capital. It is the life of the soul that counts, and the soul lives only by its contact with God. The late Lord Acton, who knew more of history than any other man of his time, wrote thus to one of his correspondents: 'Deny God, and whole branches of deeper morality lose their sanction.' When Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man, He was thinking most deeply of man as a child of God. It is that relationship, found and maintained, which is the secret of all that is vital in life.

¶ Christ's statement that 'the Sabbath was made for man' has been interpreted to mean that the day might be treated like Saturday afternoon; or its evening like any other evening in the week. But how if the Sabbath was made for man to enable him to tune in to the Power

Station of the Infinite? No limitations can be placed on the possibilities that may flow from that Source.¹

This day my Saviour rose,
And did inclose this light for His;
That, as each beast his manger knows,
Man might not of his fodder misse.
Christ hath took in this piece of ground,
And made a garden there for those
Who want herbs for their wound.

This verse of George Herbert brings us to the one use of Sunday which is vital. It is this that the Fourth Commandment makes clear. The true consecration of Sunday is its use for the special purpose of worship. In that act of devotion, where we give ourselves up with all our souls alert to listen to God's voice within and to bow down in adoration before His glory revealed in Christ, there is an opportunity which nothing else can give for making contact with Him. It is true to say that all life should be worship; but will people worship at all if their souls be not lifted up to God, and their ear be not sensitive to His voice once a week at least? It is true to say that all the world is a temple, and we should find God everywhere. But have we any assurance that people will see God anywhere, not to speak of everywhere, whose eyes are not fixed once a week at least on things invisible?

One of our writers talks about what he calls 'the hypnotism of the streets'; and the phrase is true. Our whole world is materialized and materializing. Its artificial glamour, its vulgar advertisement, make constant appeal to what is selfish in us. The world is so organized on the side of materialism that we cannot escape from its clutch without deliberately seeking to cut ourselves free. It is that detachment which Sunday worship provides. It is the opportunity to close the door that we may become aware of the spiritual and eternal. We must take means to give the thought of God and His truth and love a chance to possess our being. It is that which the Fourth Commandment demands.

¹ Sir Charles Marston.

The Law of Work

Exod. xx. 9.—'Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work.'

1. 'REMEMBER the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' But, also, 'six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work.' That is not the emphasis of the Commandment, no doubt; but there is a kind of assumption in it. In old days the Sabbath-breaker was dealt with—faithfully. But the casual gentleman, who forgot that six-sevenths of the week was meant for work, the good-naturedly lazy, the dilettante, and the ineffective half-doer have scarcely come to their own in the matter of ecclesiastical rebuke.

Now, in that estimate of ethical proportion we have not caught the Spirit of Jesus. He somewhat shocked the more rigid of His own day. He *helped* people on the Sabbath. It was one of the reasons why they killed Him. On the other hand, not the most rigid of them could suggest a suspicion against Him, that He failed to keep the command that there are six days in which we ought to work. How He worked! There were occasions when He had not time even for His meals. Therein, He was only in accord with the great Spirit, whom He revealed to us. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' How ceaselessly, how restlessly, God works in Nature. Every spring, every summer, speak to us of the constantly exerted energy of God. Whatever else we may say about earth, it is the sphere of a constant labour.

We may, therefore, conclude from the example of Jesus and from the example of Nature, which both reveal the will of God, that God intends us to appreciate that this is a command, laid upon our consciences, that, up to the limit of our power, we shall labour and do all our work. God wants us to *do* things. To that will of His, He would have a willing assent. From us He wants a love of work and a power of work. Even when it is irksome, He would have from us a recognition that it is good, and an intention and a zeal to perform it.

2. Ruskin, in the *Crown of Wild Olives*, tells that mankind may be divided into two main sections—those who work by preference and those who play by preference; and that the distinction between these two sets depends, not so much on the things that they do, as upon

the spirit in which they do them. There is implied in the conception of work, the selection of an end towards which we endeavour.

And we find ourselves faced with the fact that there is an end, in this life, which we select—our profession; and there is an end, beyond this life, imposed upon us—character. Moreover, we soon come to see that the selection of an end in life as it is, and of effort towards it, is a potent contributory means towards the achieving of the end which stretches beyond this life, the end which is given us by God, namely, the achieving of a right state of being. What is needed on our part is practical assent to this arrangement. It is an arrangement, whereby, if we are to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever, we are—unless He puts some special obstacle in our way, such as ill-health—to choose some piece of work to do in this world and to do it hard.

With due recognition of this fact, the right Christian, who purposes to achieve that state of character which glorifies God, will have certain attitudes and faculties developing within him. He will have a right scorn of idleness in all its forms. Progress depends on effort. It depends on

men who fare

Lockmouthed, a match in lungs and thews

For this fierce angel of the air

To twist with him and take his bruise.

The development of ourselves and of the race will only come in answer to strong, strenuous effortfulness.

¶ ‘An existence of play,’ says Ruskin, ‘is a good existence for gnats and jelly-fish, but not for men; neither days nor lives can be made more holy or noble by doing nothing in them; the best prayer at the beginning of a day is that we may not lose its moments; and the best grace before meat, the consciousness of having justly earned our dinner.’

Idleness

Is chief mistresse

Of vices all.

At any rate, it is the companion of vices all. It is the characteristic of the man who is the sport of the stimulus of the moment. It is the mother of waste—waste of faculty, waste of possibility of service. Does a man, who is

frittering away his time, ever consider what the future may have in store for him? Some day, perhaps at the day of judgment, but certainly some day, he will come up against his might-have-been. A voice will say, ‘I gave thee five talents; where are the five thou mightest have gained in trading?’ And he will see his life as it should have been. Perhaps he might have added to human knowledge, or guided human affairs, or flashed, through the dark, arrows of lightnings. This one and that one might have arisen to call him blessed. All this he had power for, and he threw it away. What for? For a handful of gold? Oh, no! For nothing so worth while. For a morning in an easy-chair, a diligent reading of the daily paper, a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a stroll from nowhere in particular to nowhere else in particular, and utter boredom to season it withal. This he got in exchange for life and service and work with God!

3. There is no question that it is a right assent to work that gives a dignified meaning to life. When we choose work, and set ourselves to do it, then life becomes a great thing, provided we see our work in the light of the eternal. The Lord’s Day stands at the beginning of the week: after it come the six days of labour. But over them a light is cast from the presence of God, which dominates all. ‘The Lord of Love came down from above to live with the men that work.’ And His presence, as a felt companionship, gives an extraordinary dignity to a life of effort. For we are fellow-workers with God. *Through* our work, certainly, in the development of character; but also *in* our work. All honest work, useful in the world for right ends, is work with God.

And yet it is hard for some to get that inspiration. ‘They also serve who only stand and wait.’ But if one is on a bed of pain, shut out from the world’s energy, it must be hard to believe it. Or, if the work is routine—a work that in bitterness a man thinks he could get a calculating machine to do better—it must be hard to believe it. Many a man must be thankful that the spheres of voluntary service and of family life come to suggest more vividly co-operation with God. All those, to whom the thought of co-operation with God in their tasks can come easily and copiously, should be grateful men.

¶ At the medical college of the largest hospital in London, where the vilest haunts of degradation and misery stood around its very doors, I learned that achievement by personal hard work brought the highest moments of human joy. It was said at 'The London' that our chief physician's midnight candle was still alight when the chief surgeon, the most famous of his day, was lighting his early morning lamp, so that 'the light of its workers never went out.'¹

A great opportunity of service is the very wine of life. But, indeed, there is scarce one to whom a worthy chance of doing is not given. 'Life is but a little holding lent to a mighty labour.' Believe that. 'We are one with heaven and the stars, when life is spent to serve God's aim.' Believe that. And we shall not fail of a reward, a reward given to them that in work win honour and sweet rest. It is the reward of a quiet spirit that knows its harbourage, and of entrance into life that is life indeed.

The Fifth Commandment

Exod. xx. 12.—'Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'

It has often been said that the great discovery of the nineteenth century was the child, and notably the rights of the child. Let that be admitted, and then let us emphasize that in our enthusiasm over the rights of the child we may be in danger of forgetting that he has duties along with them. There are families governed from the bottom and not from the top; in which the children have the reins. The parents are out of date. Mothers especially, just because they are always with their children and because to them fall the negatives and discipline which children dislike, are frequently thought of as unappreciative and uninformed. At the root of it lies, as at the root of most wrong, simple selfishness.

1. The difficulties of maintaining the proper relations between children and parents are greatly increased by the social conditions of life to-day. J. M. Barrie puts his finger on one of

¹ Wilfred Grenfell.

them in his book *Margaret Ogilvy* when he says: 'With so many of the family, young mothers among them, working in the factories, home-life is not so beautiful as it was. So much of what is great in Scotland has sprung from the closeness of the family ties; it is there, I sometimes fear, my country is being struck.' In industrial communities early wage-earning often creates a kind of false independence which is a bad atmosphere for filial respect to flourish in. The advantages of a superior education may also create a gulf between children and parents. We can all think of tragic situations where father and mother have toiled and saved, and given their children advantages of culture and social position they never themselves possessed, only to have a chasm sunder son or daughter from them. And when to all this we add that spirit of revolt against authority in all its forms, so characteristic of the present day, it is easy to see how these changed conditions of life work havoc with the family ties in many of our homes.

2. Again, some young people may say that their parents are not lovable, and that therefore they cannot love them; not wise, and that therefore they cannot respect them; that they are unreasonable and capricious and that therefore it is simply impossible to honour them. Are there not some young folk in our days who are disposed to take this ground and to maintain as a principle—our parents have a right to just that measure of respect and affection from us which they can claim on the ground of their intelligence and worth, no more and no less?

This looks very philosophical no doubt. But how would it have fared with us if our parents had had the same ideas about our claims on them? We were not very lovable—some of us—when we were children. To nearly every one but our parents we were singularly uninteresting, mischievous, troublesome specimens of young humanity. But happily our parents thought otherwise. They may have spoiled us; they may have disciplined us unwisely; there may be a great many things we wish they had done, or had left undone, for us in our childhood; but they *loved* us. They scarcely had a thought in which we did not occur, made no plan that did not include our welfare, denied themselves many needed things that they might give us advantages, and day and night freely spent and were spent for our sakes. Not to

treat them with respect and considerate affection is to show ourselves contemptible ingrates.

¶ Thomas Carlyle was a regular correspondent with his mother in the midst of all his great literary undertakings. When Froude went over his papers he found among them one endorsed by Carlyle, 'My last letter to my Mother,' which contained these passages: 'Oh, my dear mother! Let it ever be a comfort to you, however weak you are, that you did your part honourably and well while in strength, and were a noble mother to me and to us all. I am now myself grown old, and have had various things to do and suffer for so many years; but there is nothing I ever had to be so much thankful for as for the mother I had. That is a truth which I know well, and perhaps this day again it may be some comfort to you. Yes, surely, for if there has been any good in the things I have uttered in the world's hearing, it was *your* voice essentially that was speaking through me; essentially what you and my brave father meant and taught me to mean, this was the purport of all I spoke and wrote. And if in the few years that may remain to me, I am to get any more written for the world, the essence of it so far as it is worthy and good, will still be yours. May God reward you, dearest mother, for all you have done for me! I never can. Ah no! but will think of it with gratitude and pious love so long as I have the power of thinking.'¹

3. It may seem slightly unfair that the Decalogue should contain a Commandment for children, but none for parents. But the implications of this Commandment are equally for parents. St. Paul when he writes 'Children obey your parents in the Lord,' at once adds, 'And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath but nurture them in the chastening and admonition (the discipline and training) of the Lord.' If parents look for courtesy and deference from their children they should prove themselves worthy of honour. It does not always follow, but in general the honour parents receive from their children rests with the father and mother. And the surest road to true honour lies in so living with the Most High, and so taking children into the life with Him that their thoughts of God, their hallowed thoughts, will naturally include them.

¹ J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle*, ii. 139.

¶ Robert Louis Stevenson writes to his father: 'I wish that I might become a man worth talking of, if it were only that you should not have thrown away your pains'; and Mrs Napier says of the son: 'In the Vailima prayers I seem to hear again an old melody that I know well—the echo of his father's words and daily devotions.'

4. The promise coupled with this command, in common with almost all the promises made to the ancient people of God, applies rather to the nation than to the individual. It is the declaration of the result of accepting and acting upon a philosophy, rather than the announcement of a personal reward. There can be no doubt, however, that the personal element is present, for in the majority of cases the honouring of parents results in the formation of habits and character that tend to the lengthening of days. Character moulded in the atmosphere of honour to parents has within it the element of quiet power which tends to prolong life.

¶ Canon Peter Green writes: 'A clergyman said to me that he was glad to see, in the alternative form for the Holy Communion in the proposed Prayer Book of 1928, that the Fifth Commandment read simply "Honour thy father and thy mother." He declared that any suggestion that dutiful conduct to parents would earn any special advantage in prosperity or length of days, was out of harmony with modern ways of thinking. But, if that is so, are modern ways of thinking right or wrong? To surrender all belief in God's providence, and in His moral government of the world, would surely be to take up an almost deistic attitude. The Book of Daniel says that "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will," and few things seem to me more clear than the witness which history gives to the truth of this view. Must we say, then, that it is only in national and international affairs that His "never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth," or may we expect to find evidence of Divine rewards and punishments in private lives? I think it would be difficult to produce any *a priori* reasons against such Divine judgments. And when we turn from *a priori* arguments to concrete experience, I should be inclined to say that there are few things of which my forty years parochial experi-

ence has made me more certain than that God has a special blessing for those who honour father and mother.

Fully thirty years ago I was visiting a sick woman, one of the worst women in the parish. As she lay in bed she was complaining of her eldest daughter. The girl had run off and got married, leaving her mother ill in bed with no one to nurse her or to look after the younger children, and though it was already five or six weeks since the wedding, the woman did not even know where her daughter was living. To this day I did not know why I did it, but I suddenly interrupted the woman's complainings and said, 'I suppose, Mrs B—, you were always a good and dutiful daughter.' I have never seen a person more surprised. She stared at me for a minute, and then said, 'Who has told you?' I replied, 'No one has told me anything. Perhaps you had better tell me yourself.' She then admitted that she had treated her own mother in precisely the same way. She had run off leaving her mother ill in bed, and it was three months before her mother knew where she was living. 'Oh, well,' I said, 'God is just. He gives you back your own.' I have never had any reason to regret saying it. I believe it was the sense that her life was in God's hands, and that her troubles were neither mere chance, nor without justification, that first turned her mind to religion.

'And if I have had this and other examples of what I have believed to be God's just dealings with ill-doers, I have had very many more examples of the way in which boys and girls who have been good to their parents—parents who, very often, had done little enough to earn love or gratitude—have been blessed.'

The primary application of this promise is, however, to the nation, and it may be put in this way: That people, among whom the sacredness of the family ideal is maintained, and children render obedience and honour to their parents, will be the nation of strength, retaining its hold upon its own possessions, and abiding long in the land.

¶ The most ancient empire in the world today, China, has been preserved mainly by the profound reverence to ancestors which is largely its real working religion. The most vigorous power in the old world, Rome, owed its iron might not only to its early simplicity of life and its iron tenacity, but to the strength of

paternal authority and the willingness of filial obedience. No more serious damage can be inflicted on society or on individuals than the weakening of the honour paid to fathers and mothers.

However far afield society may develop itself as it grows away from its base, it must continue true to the end of time that every community is but an aggregate of households; that the family is the social unit; and that the principles of social order look back for all time to the home as their birthplace and their nursery. A home which does not enforce its demands presents the State with lawless citizens. Reverence for the will of the family, a will not arbitrarily and despotically imposed, but established by wise love over children, who so far as possible are taught to see its wisdom and to feel its love, is the source of respect for the authority of a democracy, where the individual must submit himself to the will of the community which he is given his full share in forming.

The nation whose homes are God-fearing, orderly, and happy, whose successive generations are linked together by holy ties of love and respect from child to parent—that nation possesses the surest safeguard for prosperity and permanence. Men who revere their ancestry and prize their families will fight for the graves of the one and the hearts of the other, just as they will fight for the altars of that God whose authority has sanctified the ties of blood.

The Sixth Commandment

Exod. xx. 13.—'Thou shalt not kill.'

WITH this Sixth Commandment we enter without question upon the Second Table of the Law, and pass from the inculcation and exposition of our duty to God to the next great section of religious morals—that which deals with our duty to man. A man's social relationships are the sphere of applied religion. His religion becomes a practical thing when it rules his conduct in everyday life. In the words of the Apostle John, 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.'

1. The change in translation which the Revised Version gives is significant and important.

Instead of 'Thou shalt not kill,' it reads 'Thou shalt do no murder,' and there is a difference in the thought suggested. Killing is unwitting and unintentional taking of life; murder consists in the deliberate taking of the life of another human being. And this is the meaning of the Commandment, for according to Canon Driver 'the Hebrew word implies violent, unauthorized killing.'

The ultimate security for human life lies in reverence for human nature. Only so far as men feel the mysteriousness of human life, its separation from all other life; only so far will that state of feeling arise that makes murder impossible. Directly that feeling dies away or begins to diminish, life becomes insecure, and murder is committed whenever passion becomes violent. Wherever there is only respect for money and no reverence for human life, murder is thought little of. So in countries where slavery exists and human nature is permanently dishonoured, not only is the life of the slave thought little of, but there is a general insecurity of life, crimes of violence are common. So it is among the gangster classes in the most civilized countries. When the humanizing influences of religion and education make men feel that there is a greatness in man which they have not seen before, that to kill a man is to commit an awful crime against God, whom in some sort every man represents; then there surrounds human life a wall of defence stronger than any penalty, however stern, can erect.

There are some who insist that this Commandment forbids the taking of human life under any circumstances. They argue that the words of the Commandment are plain and unambiguous: —'Thou shalt not kill'—the law is direct, absolute, peremptory. Is our country threatened with invasion, and are we preparing to repel it? They vehemently protest: they incessantly reiterate the Commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' Has a murderer been caught red-handed, and is the judge about to pronounce a capital sentence? They tell the judge that he is about to repeat the crime which he condemns, and appeal to the law 'Thou shalt not kill.'

It is inconceivable that the Commandment was intended to forbid the infliction of capital punishment; the death penalty is prescribed by Israel's lawgivers for several offences. That the infliction of death for murder was expedient and necessary in the condition of

the Jewish people when the Mosaic institutions were established, is certain; and it may be maintained that this tremendous vindication of the sanctity of human nature cannot be dispensed with in any nation which has not reached a high degree of civilization and morality.

Again, the Commandment was clearly not intended to forbid war. The people to whom it was given had a strict military organization. The wars in which it engaged were, many of them, conducted by men who cannot be supposed to have been ignorant of what the Commandment meant. Moses himself prayed to God that the hosts of Israel might be victorious over their enemies.

There never would have been a civilization on earth had not Justice, by the acceptance of all save a few fanatics, held in her hands a sword as well as a pair of scales. The conscience and the faith which do not issue into deeds are imperfect if not hypocritical; and that these deeds must sometimes in the name of righteousness be deeds of war, is a truth which all but the most dogmatic of pacifists have come to acknowledge.

¶ The ancient idea of battle as a ritual to which a nation's warriors were consecrated, as solemnly as her priests to the service of her altars, has notoriously been abused. But the instinct behind the idea is one frequently vindicated in history, and by many famous instances stands on grounds far firmer than either of those extremes on opposite sides of it—that war is always and only a crime or that it is a biological necessity. Where men battle for justice or liberty of conscience, where with deeper sacrifice they uphold the freedom and integrity of other peoples; where they strive for the deliverance of the oppressed; where they repel from civilization the assaults whether of barbarism or of a falsely vaunted and immoral culture—there war becomes a sacrament. For there war is not only the consecration of the soldiers themselves to the sacred cause for which it is waged, but it yields a more vital, and sometimes it may even be a more articulate, expression of the truth involved in the cause than was possible in times of peace.¹

¶ To make life an end in itself and to make a man an end in himself are things so different that every good by which a man's soul is saved

¹ G. A. Smith, *War and Peace*, 11.

must be valued above life ; and freedom, the condition of truly possessing a soul, no man can ever have except by setting it above life.

That is not to hold life a light possession or war a small evil, but it is to hold that there are worse evils than war—moral surrenders against which we must contend even to blood, and it may be the blood of others as well as our own. No mere material good can be sufficient justification, for all that a man has he will give for his life, but justice and liberty are spiritual blessings which never have been maintained at less hazard than life.¹

2. Murder, happily, is with us of comparatively rare occurrence ; but the meshes of man's law are very wide, and it may be there are some who would be horror-struck if they were charged with that crime, to whom, nevertheless, God will one day have something to say concerning His law.

In Exodus xxi. 28, 29, we read : ' If an ox gore a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be surely stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten ; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox was wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to its owner, and he hath not kept it in, but it hath killed a man or a woman ; the ox shall be stoned, and *its owner also shall be put to death.*' The responsibility of the owners—be they stockholders, or directors, or managers—for accidents, when they know that they have neglected proper precautions, is the modern equivalent of that ancient statute. Every preventable accident ought to mean that somebody will be punished ; life cannot otherwise be adequately protected.

All selfish, all guilty, all oppressive trade is murder in God's sight. It may get a man into Parliament. It may make him a millionaire or a peer, but as surely as God builds all the superstructure of social order on the foundation-stone of Christian love, so surely is the spirit of Cain on all who thrive by exploitation and by the miseries of their fellow-creatures.

¶ If you are labouring only for a wage, or for your own financial profit ; if you are labouring merely to make a name for yourself, without any regard to the needs of the brethren, then you are still in the Cain domain. You will kill your brother without turning a hair. You will stifle him in an unventilated mine or a

poisonous slum. You will use him as a means to your own end, whether you happen to be a financier exploiting his labour as a means of aggrandisement, or an unscrupulous agitator exploiting his credulity for the satisfaction of personal ambition and power.¹

' It was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill'—this time it is Christ who is the speaker—' But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.' And John puts it even more strongly : ' Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.' Ah ! this old Commandment has more teeth than we thought. Pride, envy, malice, hate—these are murder microbes ; give them their opportunity and they will bring forth death. ' Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer '—does not that word judge some of us ? You never lifted a hand against a fellow-man ? No ; but you struck at his reputation ; you thrust at him with the shafts of envy, you stabbed him with the poisoned daggers of hate. Is there one of us who can say, ' I have never done this wickedness ? ' Have we not all need to cry aloud, ' Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation,' and to pray with all the passion of our being, ' Incline our hearts, O Lord, that in all its breadth and length and depth and height, we may keep this law of Thine ? '

The Seventh Commandment

Exod. xx. 14.—' Thou shalt not commit adultery.'

THE Commandment which safeguards human life is followed by this Commandment which protects the family and asserts the sanctity of the marriage tie. The connexion of the two Commandments suggests that home is the next most sacred thing to life itself.

The underlying principle of this Commandment is the inviolable sanctity of the marriage relationship. This principle lies rooted as a fundamental truth in the very idea of that relationship as embodied in the words of its original institution—' Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife ; and they shall be one flesh.'

1. It is interesting and instructive to mark the various steps by which the high Christian

¹ John Oman.

¹ Hubert L. Simpson.

ideal of marriage has been attained. Only by slow and painful stages has man entered into full possession of the truth. When we turn to the Old Testament we find that Moses, 'because of the hardness of their hearts,' suffered a man to give to his wife a bill of divorcement, and to put her away, sometimes even on the most trivial pretext. Yet even in the Old Testament we can trace the movement towards a purer ideal. One of the favourite figures under which the prophets delight to set forth the relation of Jehovah to His people is that of husband and wife; and the beautiful *Song of Songs*—one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible—is in reality a lovely poem in honour of a simple maiden's love which, through all the allurements of Solomon and his court, remains steadfast to its first and early choice.

But it was not until Christ came that the Christian law of marriage was fully revealed; and to the key of His great words all the New Testament teaching on the subject is pitched. Husbands are to love their wives 'even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it.' The Church, according to Paul's tender and beautiful image, is the Bride of Christ; and the holy estate of Matrimony—as the marriage service of the Anglican Church, paraphrasing the Apostle's words, puts it—signifies the mystical union that is between Christ and His Church. Higher than this it is impossible to go.

The Christian Church holds wedlock in due honour as a solemn and sacred 'mystery' which is to be reverently approached and jealously guarded from even the least profanation. On the lowest estimate it is a *moral* union, which serves a social function of far-reaching importance. For the greatest part of mankind marriage is the Divinely appointed school of character, the sphere in which personality is trained for service on earth and for the large ministries of the life beyond death. It is a union of two persons to face the difficulties of life, all the hardships that may come, all the disappointments, together. It is a partnership, the giving of all one has, not just to the other person but to a common enterprise to which both are equally committed, on the basis of perfect trust and confidence.

Of course, people marry from other motives than love in this high sense, and on the basis of other considerations. Some marriages are

matters of calculation; wife or husband is considered a desirable convenience. A man may be anxious to have a home of his own, or may feel himself lonely, or may think marriage would help him in his business, or may want somebody to care for his comforts; a woman may want greater freedom, or may be eager to leave the parental home, or may wish to be supported, or may have a craving for motherhood. None of these motives is bad in itself; but none is an adequate reason for marriage.

¶ In a study of the Brontë sisters there is an interesting proposal that was made to Charlotte Brontë. It came from her best friend's brother, a Church of England curate, who had made up his mind that he ought to secure a wife. He first asked the daughter of his former vicar, whom in his diary he characterizes as 'a steady, intelligent, sensible and, I trust, good girl named Mary.' She refused him, and he enters in his diary, 'On Tuesday last received a decisive reply from M. A. L.'s papa; a loss, but I trust a providential one. Believe not her will but her father's. Write to a Yorkshire friend, C. B.' Shortly after occurs the record, 'Received an unfavourable reply from C. B. The will of the Lord be done.'

Or at the other extreme, marriages are made by an unthinking sentimental attraction. Dr Johnson, in his now seldom read romance, *Rasselas*, writes: 'A youth and a maiden, meeting by chance or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of each other. Having little to divert attention or diversify thought, they find themselves uneasy apart, and therefore conclude that they shall be happy together. They marry and discover what nothing but voluntary blindness before had concealed.' Judgment, as well as sentiment, must be wedded. Our modern way of letting young people meet and see much of each other is a long step towards helping them to find out whether, besides sentimental attraction, they are intelligently drawn together in purpose and conscience.¹

No more disastrous experiment can be made by a girl than to marry a man whom she likes but does not love, in the hope that, as the years roll on, liking may develop into loving. It may, in some instances; but in how many cases, alas! instead of the dull spark bursting into flame, it has been quenched altogether in the

¹ H. S. Coffin, *The Ten Commandments*, 137.

deeper waters of married life. Love, deep, true, strong, is the first foundation-stone of a happy marriage, and in all such marriages the love grows deeper as the years go by.

¶ Charles Kingsley's married life was so perfect that he would not listen to any suggestion of its discontinuance in another life. He was twitted with the text that says that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage. 'All that I can say about that text,' he replied, 'is that it has nothing to do with me and my wife. What I feel to her now, I shall feel for ever. I say deliberately that, if I do not love my wife, body and soul, as well *there* as I do *here*, then there is no real resurrection of my body, or of my soul, and *I* shall not be *I*.'

There's a bliss beyond all that the minstrel hath told,

When two that are knit in one heavenly tie,
With heart never changing, and brow never cold,

Love on through all ills, and love on till they die.

2. It is in respect of its effect upon personality that we see most easily why the Christian religion sets its face against the easy dissolution of marriage. That tends to reduce marriage to a convenience—to be discarded when it has ceased to serve the fleeting passion of the moment. Personal relations need permanence if they are to have their full effect in the training and exercise of character and personality. We then exhibit the love that will not easily let go. There are cases of hardship, it is alleged, and no one would speak lightly of them, knowing too well their tragic bitterness. How easy, with some picture before our eyes of a Rochester tricked into marriage with the mad daughter of an infamous mother, and Jane Eyre in sight, how easy to question if human personality is not thwarted, rather than enhanced, by the perpetuity of such a union! 'Bertha Mason dragged me,' Charlotte Brontë makes Rochester say, 'through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste.' And yet, are not these the very situations where personality achieves some of its greatest conquests—cases in which husbands, with noble patience and tenderness, have borne with wives whose minds have become over-wrought, and of wives who have loved intemperate husbands

out to the end? Is marriage always to be thought of merely as an easy and pleasurable relationship, and never as a discipline, demanding heroic virtue? In the Christian view it can only be a relationship in which we serve in love, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.¹

¶ There are cases, I grant you—cases of impenitent wickedness—where the higher law is suspended, finds no chance to act—where relief from the bond is itself mercy and justice. But the higher law is always there. You know the formula—'It was said by them of old time—But *I* say unto you.' And then follows the new law of a new society. And so in marriage. If love has the smallest room to work—if forgiveness can find the narrowest foothold—love and forgiveness are imposed on—demanded of—the Christian! here as everywhere else. Love and forgiveness—not penalty and hate!²

It was God's merciful and unalterably loyal love for His people that led Hosea to forgive and take back Gomer, his faithless wife. The Divine Husband became an irresistible ideal for the human husband. We take all the wealth we have discovered in our richest home experiences, and let it be to us a suggestion of what we may expect from God. We think of the devotion, the patience, the tenderness, the trust, the allegiance, given us by our nearest and dearest; and we look up to the heavens in faith and expect nothing less, when we say to ourselves, 'God is love.' And so far from failing us, we discover that our highest anticipations, based on human affection, are too small. God outdoes man's or woman's best; and he sends husband and wife back from their experience of Him to fill the cup of their mutual obligations with a fuller measure, because of the overflowing heart they have found in Him. We learn love's meaning first in our most tender human relations; but the highest definition these give us proves inadequate when we try to put into it all that God's devotion means to us. 'Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us.' The Calvary of long ago o'ertops the loftiest summit of devotion we know anywhere else. And from our experience of Divine redeeming love we draw inspirations for that tender loyalty which crowns the union of man and wife.

¹ E. G. Urwin.

² Mrs Humphry Ward, *The Marriage of William Ashe*.

The Eighth Commandment

Exod. xx. 15.—'Thou shalt not steal.'

1. THE society for the guidance of which this Commandment was given was, of course, a much simpler one, in which the unity of the family and the solidarity of the tribe left relatively few unprovided for, and in which the problems of the distribution of wealth were not as acute as in our own day. We must keep this economic and social background in view as we consider the prohibition of theft.

It is hardly necessary to say anything concerning obvious transgressions of the Commandment by the highwayman, the burglar, the pick-pocket. These offences against the law deserve punishment; but in assigning it account should be taken of the circumstances, the character, and the future possibilities of the thief. A starving man who steals a loaf, a father who is driven by the wants of his family to some fraud, a youth who can find no employment, and wants to relieve his family of a burden and breaks into a shop—these must all be punished, it may be, but far less guilty are they than the suburban woman who, without need, makes a practice of shop-lifting; and how many magistrates measure the legal penalty by the moral offence? Not retribution or deterrence only should be regarded as the end of punishment, but reformation also. So far as theft is due, not to sheer wickedness, but to social wrong inflicted on the wrong-doer, by defect in the economic system, which withholds from a man the means of living, or even the chance of earning his living, society itself is the transgressor.

2. But the prohibition 'Thou shalt not steal' has a much wider application to many moral offences, not all of which are so regarded. The company promoter who issues a prospectus which promises profits which can never be realized, and which there is no intention to make the effort to realize; the speculator in the stock-exchange 'bear' or 'bull' who manipulates the price of shares in his own interest with no regard to the actual condition of the company involved; the employer who pays his employees less than their labours are worth to him, taking advantage of their poverty, their dread of unemployment, or their helplessness because not protected by a trade union; the

tradesman who puts in material and work inferior to that which he has undertaken to supply; the shopkeeper who pretends that his goods are more valuable than the price he asks for them; the government which inflates or deflates the currency for a party advantage, regardless of the effect on the community generally—all these are, even if common custom condones any of their practices, *stealing*; they are gaining a personal advantage at a loss to others.

Betting and gambling are also against the spirit of this Commandment. They involve a transfer of wealth without a proper equivalent in goods, services, or personal relations. It may not be possible to make all these offences crimes; but they should fall under moral condemnation. Many Christians need to have much more sensitive consciences; and most Churches need to hold a much higher standard of conduct in these matters before their members and their community.

¶ I quite agree with you as to playing for money and betting. I remember putting down my stakes *once* on board ship—a shilling or so, guessing what way the ship had made. In doing so I told the fellows, 'I am doing this just to show you that I am not a mere bigot, but,' I said, 'why should I want other folks' money for no service, or want them to have mine? Can't you leave money alone sometimes?' . . . All this betting is really symbolic of lack of interest in really good and jolly things. It means that men have to create interest by these artificial means.¹

3. Jesus affirmed that 'ye cannot serve God and Mammon'; the desire for worldly possessions is a deep-rooted and strong passion. Men want to possess far beyond their necessities, comforts, and even luxuries, for wealth gives social rank and influence, power to keep others in dependence, and so exercise an arbitrary control over them. Possession for rank or power is desired long after the need of possession for use has been more than satisfied. A far larger number are forced into the service of Mammon by anxiety for the supply of the necessities of self and others; family affection and solicitude may impose this bondage to gain the daily bread. Men live and labour in what has been

¹ H. J. W. Hetherington, *Life and Letters of Sir Henry Jones*, 279.

truly described as 'an acquisitive society,' an economic system, in which self-interest is the too dominant motive, and competition the too prevalent method. Not only do its victims suffer physically and even often morally from 'the struggle for existence,' but even the victors have often to pay the price of a moral deterioration, of which many are still unaware, but of which a growing number are becoming sensitively conscious. 'Business is business' means for some Christian men that they would be 'down and out' themselves if they did not acquiesce in, "not necessarily dishonest, but certainly harsh and cruel, practices. If they tried to carry out the Golden Rule they feel that bankruptcy would be the result. Sometimes, if they did not lower wages, or dismiss some of their workers, they could not hold their own in the ruthless competition. All business is not as bad as that, but a great deal is. Mammon is a tyrannous master.

4. For this morally dangerous situation, in which the Eighth Commandment in its present applications is being widely disregarded, the main reason is that the material development of modern society has outrun the moral and religious. Because the Kingdom of God is not being sought first, Mammon is allowed to rule. The Christian Church must examine itself, first of all, as to how far the 'world' has penetrated its own thought and life, and, having been cleansed from that taint, it must frankly and boldly challenge the tacit assumption in economics and politics that the material interests must come first.

What are some of the principles which the Church should proclaim?

(1) In face of the mechanization and materialization of human labour and life, which man's increased wealth due to his control over physical forces and the resulting increasing productivity of modern methods of industry have brought about, it should proclaim that 'man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord,' and that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'

(2) The Golden Rule: 'all things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets'—this law of justice or righteousness, which is still less than

the law of love, should be asserted; it is the *minimum*, not the *maximum*, demand on the Christian in all his relations with his fellows, including the economic.

(3) Jesus' teaching about God's care for man's bodily needs, His example in healing as well as preaching, His standard for the judgment of the nations (Matt. xxv. 31-46) enforced as it is by His 'inasmuch' are surely a threefold cord which cannot be broken, binding the care of the body on the Christian conscience.

¶ 'As a boy about eight years of age,' wrote William Quarrier, 'I stood in the High Street of Glasgow, barefooted, bareheaded, cold, and hungry, having tasted no food for a day and a half, and, as I gazed at each passer-by, wondering why they should not help such as I, a thought passed through my mind that I would not do as they, when I would get the means to help others.'

(4) Although, owing to the economic conditions of His environment and age, this care of the body was illustrated by instances of individual philanthropy, yet as Jesus was no legislator for a society, but left His Church the guidance of the Spirit under changed conditions, individual philanthropy may be quite inadequate to fulfil the obligation imposed. And it was under the guidance of the Spirit that during last century there developed, not instead of philanthropy, which is still urgently needed, but as its necessary complement, to accomplish what it could not achieve, what has been called *social politics*, the provision by the community of a number of social services, the range of which is still expanding, where individual effort would be less efficient and less economical, even if at all practicable.

(5) Beyond the Golden Rule there is the law of love, which is in the strict use of language no law, but rather a motive, a disposition, a habit, a principle of manifold application—'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' This Commandment Jesus illustrates in the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Sheep and the Goats. The supreme instance and motive is His confession, 'The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.' He did not measure His intentions by His expectations from others, for love goes beyond even the Golden Rule, and He even in His love went beyond the law of love, equal for self and

neighbour, for He gave His life to save all men. Paul, after reciting some of the Commandments, offers the comment: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour'; that may be the fulfilment of the Law as prohibition; it is not love's own fulfilment as service and sacrifice. To withhold benefit is often to inflict injury. To deprive any man of the provision God as Father makes for the needs of all His children by any abuse of the rights of property is from the standpoint of Christian love a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

The Ninth Commandment

Exod. xx. 16.—'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'

1. HEBREW procedure attached the highest importance to the duty of truthfulness in a witness before a court of justice, but the temptations to make partial or untruthful depositions were so subtle, the possibilities of a witness being bribed or bullied by a wealthy defendant or an influential plaintiff were so notorious, and the tendency to allow personal antipathies to colour evidence was so prevalent that Hebrew literature contains repeated and explicit warnings against false witness. The Ninth Commandment is the most concise, but the later statement in the Book of the Covenant enables us to understand the implications of its stern prohibition. 'You must never tamper with a poor man's rights in court. Avoid false charges, never have innocent and guiltless people put to death, nor acquit bad men. You must never accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds even men whose eyes are open, and it destroys the case of a good man.' No doubt such warnings apply to judges as well as to witnesses, but they indicate vividly the sort of temptations into which an ordinary witness might fall. Also they hint that dishonest evidence might lead to judicial murder, as it did in the case of Naboth. In that sense the Ninth Commandment becomes a special application of the Sixth, just as in another light it might be taken as a particular application of the Eighth; 'God,' said Luther, 'will as little permit us to injure or underrate our neighbour's good name, his character or integrity, as to deprive him of his goods and money.'

¶ The Calas and the Dreyfus trials in France, or the perjuries in the Popish Plot which disgraced seventeenth-century England, are notable examples of false evidence being concocted and accepted on a large scale for partisan reasons.

2. Despite the strict enforcement of penalties for perjury in modern civilization, there are still communities in which evidence may be either hired or silenced by unscrupulous litigants, and judges misled. But there are numerous cases which evade the law of libel. Private and social relationships are repeatedly damaged by loose talk, by whispering scandal, or by malicious insinuations, which poison life outside any law-court. A Hebrew witness was a full-grown man. Literally the Ninth Commandment did not apply to women. But its wider range covers the talkativeness of both sexes. Though Pope, Sheridan, and Thackeray loved to expose this sin in women, Shakespeare drew Don John and Borachio as well as Iago when he depicted the malign spirit of detraction and malicious insinuation. It was men, not women, who brought false witness against our Lord and St Stephen. This is a sin of our common humanity, whether it is wanton or careless, and whatever the motive may be, self-interest or a sinister delight in discrediting some one in our circle.

¶ Tennyson has sketched the typical detractor in Vivien, who contributed not a little to the breaking up of the Round Table. She

let her tongue

Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

(1) Perhaps the most prevalent source of dishonest testimony lies in *party spirit*. When Queen Mary, nearly two and a half centuries ago, overheard some of her court ladies indulging in scandalous gossip, she would quietly ask them if they had ever read her favourite sermon. It was Tillotson's *Against Evil-Speaking*, one of the classical deliverances on the Ninth Commandment. The preacher begins by declaring that he had 'pitched upon one of the common and reigning vices of the age, calumny and evil-speaking, by which men contract so much guilt to themselves and create so

much trouble to others,' and incidentally remarks that 'the zealots of all parties have got into a scurvy trick of lying for the truth.' The best of people may be tempted to believe and repeat anything that is discreditable to those of whose opinions they happen to disapprove. They insinuate or disseminate reports to the personal disadvantage of their opponents, as though they were justified in thinking evil of such creatures. They have no scruple about spreading suspicions of the motives or conduct of the other side.

¶ After John Wesley had read a tract upon an interpretation of the astronomy in the early chapters of Genesis, he entered in his *Journal*: 'Is it well thus to run down all that differ from us? Dr Pye is an ingenious man, but so is Dr Robinson also; so are twenty more, although they understand Moses in a quite different manner.'

(2) Short of this, though not less heinous, is the carping, *ensorious temper*, which also tempts people of definite convictions, when they realize that others do not share their tenets or follow their particular habits. William Law has drawn this character in his *Serious Call*. He describes 'a pious, temperate, good man,' a church-goer and a liberal giver, and yet, 'when he visits, you generally hear him relating how sorry he is for the defects and failings of a neighbour. He is always letting you know how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour, how loth to say that which he is forced to say; and how gladly he would conceal it if it could be concealed.' 'He even seemed, to both himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil-speaking temper.' As Byron put it, such a person is

Skill'd by a touch to deepen scandal's tints
With all the kind mendacity of hints,
While mingling truth with falsehood, sneers
with smiles,
A thread of candour with a web of wiles.

The danger of this temper is that the speaker has no private end to serve, but poses as a real lover of truth and goodness. The more quietly and reluctantly, to all appearance, the thing is done, the more mischief it does. The rumour becomes effective as it is concealed under a specious concern for high ends. In point of

fact, this sin of dishonest witness against the character of another person implies that one possesses some weight and influence. It is only those who are known or believed to be honest whose opinion is asked or believed. A notorious liar or any one who is considered avowedly unreliable would carry little or no influence by what he said against others.

(3) The Bible cautions those whose sense of humour may lead them too far in playing with the truth about other people. 'As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour and saith, Am I not in sport?' Truth about men is so sacred that it is irreverent to trifle with it, exactly as we shrink from joking in the things we say about God. In the good stories which we tell concerning other people, we have to check ourselves and be sure that there is no malice in them. By no means all humour is entirely kind; and while many men are helped by being laughed at, love, and only love, can laugh helpfully.

3. To speak evil of other people is not to speak of some evil that they may have done or said. Upon occasion moral criticism and blame have to be outspoken, in the interests of integrity. Just as the Sixth Commandment, with its prohibition of murder, never touched the fighting duty of Israel or the right to inflict capital punishment, so the Ninth simply prohibits malicious, careless testimony, to the damage of another's character, without denying the moral instinct of open reprobation for evil in any circle. It is a duty, for example, to hint that some person may not be reliable, when we find others likely to be led away by his influence, or to mention flaws in a man's character, if they are being missed by the credulous. Yet even here the evidence has to be given with scrupulous care, and with strict guard against private pique and a secret relish for detraction, against the tendency to put the worst construction upon other men's actions.

'Judge not, that ye be not judged,' our Lord told His followers. When circumstances compel us to form and express judgments about other people, we must clearly recall that in our limited human way we are attempting one of God's functions, and must remind ourselves how our Father judges. In Luke's account of Jesus' words the sequence runs: 'Be ye merciful even

as your Father is merciful. And judge not.' The critical attitude is essentially ungodlike. It is worth remembering that so keen an analyst of character as Shakespeare puts upon the lips of his worst villain, Iago, the sentence: 'I am nothing if not critical.' And the only cure for the critical spirit is a very large dose of love. We have to discriminate or we have no taste, but it must be love's discrimination. Landor once, repenting of some censures he had passed on Milton, said to Southey, 'Are we not somewhat like two little beggar-boys who, forgetting that they are in tatters, sit noticing a few stains and rents in their father's raiment?' 'But,' replied Southey, '*they love him.*' And love qualifies us, as it qualifies our God, for judging, where we must judge.

The Tenth Commandment

Exod. xx. 17.—'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.'

1. IN that priceless fragment of autobiography preserved for us in the seventh chapter of Romans, St Paul says: 'I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.' He may well have found the last prohibition in the Decalogue the most searching. Murder, adultery, theft, and bearing false witness—he could pass all these tests. But, like the Sermon on the Mount, the Tenth Commandment probes into motives and feelings. It is not concerned merely with overt acts; it unseals those springs of envy from which breaches of the other Commandments proceed. Faced with this challenge, Paul could not honestly say, This Commandment I have kept from my youth up.

His difficulties centred on the verb itself, not on the catalogue of objects of desire which loom so large in the letter of the original law. The old command had been drawn up for simpler and, one might say, coarser natures than that of Saul of Tarsus. 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.' The law so formulated belongs to a primitive androcentric

society, where a wife is a form of property, not quite so valuable as one's house, though dearer than servants or beasts of burden. While the social order here suggested has long since passed away in the West, the particular possessions specified may still be objects of envy to many moderns, and if the pupil of Gamaliel cared for none of these things, the details of the Commandment may still trip some of us up to-day. Lacking domestic help, it easily and frequently happens that one covets one's neighbour's maid-servant! And alas! houses and wives may even now become objects of envious and corrupt desire. Such tangible objects may not have tempted an ardent Pharisee. Saul probably discovered the meaning of 'Thou shalt not covet' in another context. The learning or the wisdom of Gamaliel may have aroused his envy, and the serenity of dying Stephen stung him into the realization that his desire of a righteousness of his own was tainted with sin at its source.

2. To-day covetousness is stimulated more often by general than by particular objects. We envy our neighbour's wealth or position or power, his advantages or influence or esteem. We would like to surpass him in this way or that, we do not desire to appropriate his actual possessions. Covetousness so defined exercises a far-reaching and devastating influence. It pervades and poisons our social and industrial life.

Jealousy and envy contribute not a little to the feverish acquisitiveness and competitive rivalry of the modern world. The desire to get more or to be more than one's neighbour prompts a larger part of our activities than we care to admit. Rather perilously, the social ethic of Puritanism has ceased to insist on contentment with food and raiment, and stresses the virtues of thrift and self-help. The resultant private enterprise has achieved much. But the desire to get on, which may be praiseworthy in itself, has easily merged into the desire to outshine one's neighbour and degenerated into a readiness to get on at the expense of one's neighbours.

¶ Professor F. H. Knight, of the University of Chicago, says in his discussion of the ethics of competition: 'The modern idea of enjoyment as well as of achievement has come to consist chiefly in keeping up with or getting

ahead of other people, in a rivalry for things about whose significance, beyond furnishing objectives for the competition itself, little question is asked. It is surely one function of ethical discussion to keep the world reminded that this is not the only possible conception of value, and to point out its contrast with the religious ideals to which the Western world has continued to render lip-service—a contrast resulting in fundamental dualism in our thought and culture.'

3. In the sphere of international relations we are confronted with the same interweaving of good and evil. In the development of imperialism we have combined the quite defensible desire to secure the satisfaction of legitimate needs with the pressure of motives that might be grouped under the head of covetousness. There is, unfortunately, too much truth in St Augustine's description of great empires as great systems of brigandage. Yet the politics of the nations which we describe as 'Have-nots' are not inspired simply by a sense of injustice, and their demands do not keep within the limits which a concern for justice would impose. A real factor in determining the attitudes of such nations is envy of the good fortune or success of other peoples, and whenever a race or nation or social group of any kind surrenders to inordinate self-pity and blind hatred of others, it is safe to diagnose covetousness as a real cause of such a morbid condition.

¶ Only as this ancient Commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet anything that is thy neighbour's,' is graven on the hearts of nations have we a lasting basis for peace. No patriotism without it is Christian, or, for that matter, even truly Jewish, according to an international application of the Decalogue. No satisfactory world-tribunal will be erected to adjudicate the differences of nations until the social conscience of the represented powers feels the imperative of this ancient moral principle.¹

4. Normally and naturally we associate the sin of covetousness with the lust after material wealth and great possessions. But, as we have already suggested may have been the case with Saul of Tarsus, the sin may be manifested in other, higher realms. The spheres of art and religion lie open to the inroads of the same

invader. The real saint or artist will be marked by generosity and unself-concern. Yet many men of genuine gifts succumb to vanity and jealousy; and covetousness rather than ambition may be the last infirmity of noble minds.

It is always a hard problem to determine how far we ought to accept ourselves and our limitations, and it is never easy to discover when discontent is truly divine. It might be better to be spurred on by envy than to remain undisturbed in self-complacency. Yet over and over again the man with one talent hides his talent in a napkin because he is disheartened or discontented by comparison with his better-equipped neighbour. He is not prepared to accept himself as he is and make the most of the gifts entrusted to him. More people than we often realize are unnerved and reduced to ineffectiveness by what is at bottom a feeling of jealousy or envy. They covet their neighbour's gifts and neglect their own.

In writing to the Colossians, St Paul identifies covetousness with idolatry. If it is not the only or the worst form of idolatry, it is probably the most widespread. At long last, all idolaters are egotists, and covetousness is just self-aggrandizement. Yet the Buddhist suppression of desire is not the true solution of the problem. Even emulation and ambition may be sublimated, as when St Paul advises his friends in Thessalonica, 'to be ambitious to be quiet.' There may certainly be irony as well as wisdom in such a paradoxical goal of ambition. And St Paul does not hesitate to encourage the Corinthians to be zealous to secure the best gifts. But he reminds them of the more excellent way, for the best gift of all is available for all, and the least gifted Christian may claim his share in the supreme grace of love which cuts at the root of every form of covetousness.

¶ Henry Melvill Gwatkin was lecturer in Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge in 1884 when it was decided to endow a Chair in that subject. Most of his friends were confident that Gwatkin would be appointed and he was strong in hope himself. But when the decision was made the choice fell upon Mandell Creighton, who was then Vicar of Embleton in Northumberland, and the keenness of Gwatkin's disappointment can be imagined. He had been doing the work for twelve years. It would not have been surprising if some bitterness had crept into his heart when he heard that the

¹ H. S. Coffin, *The Ten Commandments*, 200.

honour had gone to another. But next day he wrote to Creighton and his letter is a glorious example of the Christian's triumph over jealousy. He said: 'For myself I am ready to work under you and to support you loyally in all that falls to me to do. So far as I know my own heart, no jealousy of yesterday shall ever rise on my side to mar the harmony and friendship in which I ask and hope to live with the first Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Cambridge.'

When he succeeded Creighton in the Chair in 1891, the promise of his letter had been kept in spirit and in truth.¹

The Darkness—and God

Exod. xx. 21.—'And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.'

THE Arctic explorer, Swerdrup, in describing the start of his expedition in the *Fram*, confesses that 'the only thing which made it a little warm around us was the crowd which had gathered to see us off. The quays were packed with people, and every height and point was black with them, whilst the fjord was covered with boats which had come to see the last of us.' This might stimulate the party for a while, but the boats would fall behind and the spectators send their final cheer; for them there was nothing left but a vague imagination of the terrors and desolations which the others must encounter, and meanwhile the adventurers fared forth alone to the darkness in front. It is in such a connexion of feeling as this that we should read the text—'the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.'

1. Let us think, first, of this universal and inevitable human feeling of awe and wonder in facing out to the dark. Most people are conscious of a feeling, mixed of curiosity and avoidance, in presence of mortal sickness. We look that way when we must, yet nature shrinks back and we turn to other interests, only to be recalled once more to this, wondering and asking questions. The contrasts are so glaring; for the man whom last we saw hearty, solid, enjoying, with all of life inviting him, the whole

¹ W. E. Sangster, *He Is Able*, 71.

balance of existence has now been altered. The present, with its possibilities, has been contracted to a span: the visible has nothing to offer, whilst the future and the invisible have begun to count for everything. When we think of him thus his figure, homely and familiar as it was, assumes a certain tragic dignity. He is moving out, our friend and comrade, upon this last adventure, and in loving thought we give him convoy whilst we can, knowing that soon he must travel unattended. The large concerns which crowded his life have fallen away, and he is lying now, incapable of thought or decision, and needing to be soothed and cheered and quieted like a little child. It is with a pitying compassion that we think of a companion and rival who can never again join issue with us, and we should gladly do anything to relieve him; but it is not over subtle to affirm that in such feelings there is a hidden strain of self-pity, as if, in these kindly attentions, we were by anticipation doing it for our own sickroom. For in the recesses of the mind the knowledge lurks that this or something like this may be waiting for us—this gradual eclipse, this slow and laboured last mile.

In the text we read of a 'darkness where God was,' and a situation such as we have imagined would be altogether desolating if it were mere vacant darkness into which our friend is moving; but this also is a darkness where God is. There is something high and sacred in its character, which healthy people, looking at sickness from afar, can scarcely understand, but from inside we have sufficient testimonies both in Scripture and in other books. 'When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee, for I am the Lord God, thy Saviour': that should not be read merely as a Bible word, but as a record of living experience from men who had passed that way and who knew.

Where God is, hope cannot be absent. This seeming termination of life is not to be interpreted as an end of everything, for men and women of all degrees in pacing out to it have confessed its extraordinary interest; they have felt themselves moving towards a new experience and looking for the outbursting of such a light as never was on sea or land.

¶ A week before his death John Sterling wrote to Carlyle, 'I tread the common road into the great darkness without any thought of

fear and with very much of hope. . . . It is all very strange, but not one hundredth part so sad as it seems to the standers-by.' And about the same time he wrote to his boy, 'Everything is so wonderful, great and holy, so sad and yet not bitter, so full of death and so bordering on heaven.'

2. This hope grows clearer when we remember Him who went that way on our behalf. The Hebrews had feared to face God for themselves and had pleaded that some one should come in between, so Moses now was entering the darkness as their representative. To them this seemed a tremendous adventure, and the whole narrative is shadowed with terror. The immediate presence of the Divine appeared to them to ensure destruction, so the Mountain had been fenced round and even a beast which broke through must die. This was in the people's mind as, awe-stricken, they gazed at a man passing in where they would have shuddered to enter. Centuries later we read in Jeremiah the Divine challenge, 'Who is he that would put his life in jeopardy by approaching near to me?' But now for his people's sake, to bring light and sureness back to them, Moses was bold to face the terrors of the dark. That was a mediatorial venture, a man daring everything for the sake of the people whom he loved.

And in our Christian thoughts of death and its mystery we must put first the thought of our Lord Jesus who, for us men and for our salvation, passed into the secrets of the night. He was young, with life little more than begun, yet we see Him setting His face to go to Jerusalem. He was fully conscious of what awaited Him there, and Mark records that those who walked with Him that day were 'astonished and afraid.' His friends gave Him convoy so long as they could—first the jubilant crowd from Bethany and then the Eleven, and finally, in Gethsemane, the Three, for the company thinned as He passed on towards the night; but at last He was alone.

¶ 'Jesus is alone in the earth,' says Pascal: 'not only is there no one to feel or share His pain, there is no one to know it. Heaven and He are alone in that knowledge.'

The gospel story hints at burdens scarcely to be borne, which yet were not refused: it tells of marks of agony like the sweat dropping from

His brow. But this He accepted, consciously for our sake that, through Him, we might have a confidence which by ourselves we could not secure. Surely it is right that, with wonder and awe and with adoring gratitude, we should watch Him as He thus goes, since by His going He broke the tyranny of the dark, and gave both life and death another look.

¶ Archbishop Laud uttered these words on the scaffold: 'Lord, I am coming as fast as I can. I know I must pass through the shadow of death before I can come to see Thee. But that is only *umbra mortis*, a shadow of death, a little darkness upon nature; since Thou, Lord, by Thy goodness, hast broken the jaws and the power of death.'

But more than this remains to be said, for as He had penetrated to the secrets of the dark, so He came forth from it, bringing to men the assurance that His offering had been accepted. There was pardon now for their taking, there was access into God's high presence, there was an end of fear; 'He was raised again,' says Paul, 'for our justification,' that we might know and be assured that God is now our friend. The Resurrection of Jesus opens up for man new reaches of hope and progress: it is set in between the old world and the new, and 'there is a new power of music and of song given to the humanity which has hope of the Resurrection.'

The writer to the Hebrews has added another to the catalogue of glorious titles borne by our Lord; he calls Him 'our Forerunner who for us has entered within the veil,' and who thus gives assurance of a friendly presence there. If in our activity we have trusted Him and known His support, we may trust Him utterly in our prostration and the collapse of our powers. 'Though I walk through the valley of the deep shadow I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.'

¶ Macaulay says in his essay on Addison: 'Of the Psalms his favourite was that which represents the Ruler of all things under the endearing image of a shepherd, whose crook guides the flock safe, through gloomy and desolate glens, to meadows well-watered and rich with herbage. On that goodness to which he ascribed all the happiness of his life, he relied in the hour of death with the love which casteth out fear.'

Love's Refusal

Exod. xxi. 5.—‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free.’

No man of living sympathy could be quite insensible to the pathos of a scene like this. Incidents of just this type must have occurred from time to time at a certain stage in Hebrew history. It was a question of the treatment of slaves. Many of these were broken and bankrupt Hebrews. They had been sold to satisfy their creditors, and the law of Israel, which dealt with slaves in a spirit of comparative humanity, made an effort to have them treated kindly in the wreck of their fortunes. They were not to be assigned the meanest forms of work; in particular, after seven years they must go free.

But the slave, if he had come to his master alone, was to go out alone. It is true, he might by this time have a home of his own. But if it was so, if he now had a wife and children, said the law, they must be left behind as his master's property at his discharge. That was the price of freedom.

Like most tragic or noble things in human life, the scene is a parable we can all understand. We can fill it up with a Christian meaning and apply it to ourselves. We can do that without becoming in the least fantastic.

1. First, love at its best will always mean renunciation, and, in a special sense, the renunciation of freedom. Take any great religious teacher, and much of what he has to say bears on *obedience*. There is no room in the army for the man who cannot take orders, and in the Kingdom of God, equally, there is no room for the man who will not own the great mastery of Christ.

Freedom ‘to be able to follow one's inclination without restraint,’ the absence of control, is the ruin of all true living. It will not bear being put in practice. Indeed, there are analogies in Nature herself which proclaim as much. As a scientific writer has pointed out: ‘There are certain volatile substances, such as free hydrogen, which occasionally succeed in escaping from the earth's attraction, and wander forth into space never to return. The slave has broken Nature's commandment—it has burst its fetters and is free. And Nature revenges

herself by placing the truant under the ban of her most terrible curse. She shuts it out from the beneficent operation of progress and improvement: the sentence of outlawry is upon it, for it all hope of promotion in the scale of existence is at an end.’

The same thing is familiar in human life. Here is a man who, as we say, has just set up a home for himself. He has bound himself with loved and honoured ties. And instinctively he feels that in one real sense his liberty has been curtailed.

Come to the highest realm of all. Take the man who has made a new beginning, this time one who has begun to be a Christian. He now loves Christ, and knows that he must have Christ for his helper and friend. Bonds of new desire and faith and ambition are forming every day. An infinite gratitude is slowly taking possession of him. And it all means that he is less and less free to take his own way. He cannot do the things which before he used to do unthinkingly.

Now, all through life openings are constantly occurring when the old freedom is proffered to us once more. Either it may be that we are fiercely tempted by some particular sin, or times may seem to come when we are drawn to reconsider generally the whole idea of following Christ, and the possibility of casting off His service opens up. Strike off the chains and step out into the sunlight, with the highroad under our feet that leads wherever we long to go. These are the whispers; but cannot we tell in advance what the answer of the faithful heart will be? Freedom is good and Christ gives it abundantly; but freedom without Christ, freedom rather to put Christ away, is evil through and through. Freedom is sweet, but what are all its joys if to taste them we must leave our best friend behind? Whatever we must renounce is as nothing to that which we have found in Him. So the matter is fixed and settled. We have no choice but to say, I love my life in the Master's house, I will not go out free.

¶ ‘We are Jacobites to the Lord Jesus,’ Robert Barbour wrote in one of his beautiful letters. ‘To us, too, as to our fathers, “the King is over the water,” and we keep our heart's best place for an Absent One.’

2. But, secondly, the episode pictured in the

text makes us think how the effects of Christian experience are cumulative. It was in the *seventh* year of bondage that the chance of freedom came to the slave, and he rejected it; but can we tell how he might have acted if it had met him in the *first*? That is how it goes with Christian people too. Life is the great teacher, we often say; and there is no subject on which it has so much to teach as the sufficiency and the faithfulness of God. There are certain thoughts about God which He does not put into our mind at the start, for they are unsuited to our age, and in place of being a strength to us they would be a burden. But as we go on, if we steadily add year to year of prayer, of cultivated acquaintance with Bible thoughts of Christ, of earnest trying to obey the higher impulse, little by little we grow in certainty and grasp of our own faith and in the corresponding power to help others. The months and years tell.

It is the same with the true kind of home. All the years husband and wife have been faithful to each other, and now their mutual knowledge is something with which no outward event or words of man can interfere. They are not even tempted now to ask whether love is a reality, or whether God leads those who put their lives in His hand. The effect of forty years together has been a cumulative proof of all these things. Faith in each other is by this time a part of their being.

So the Christian's relation to Christ to-day is no mere mushroom growth, no mere extempore bond, no transient feeling or tendency. It gathers up into itself the life of years. Cut down the aged tree, and for every year one may count a ring of fibre; so take, as it were, a cross-section of a Christian's trust in his great Lord, and if only we had the magic glass, we might read in it the story of God's goodness and the man's faith through all the years.

We have often heard it said that in religion we cannot live upon the past. And that is true. We must indeed make our way to God newly every morning and see His face before we set out to live and act. But in a sense not less true it is just upon the past, our own past with God, that we all of us are living. Our trust in Him is rich with what He has already been to us. Our thought of Him has been deepened by what His Spirit once taught us to see. Our vision of duty for His Kingdom has in it the

impulses, the gathering and creative powers, of all those bygone days in which He showed what He would have us do. These things have given a freedom and confidence and depth to our sense of the unseen Father that could not have been crowded into the first weeks of conscious faith, and which, therefore, His kindness has allowed to come to us piece by piece, according to the need or joy of the time.

It looks as if there were two classes of mind to which this great truth, that Christian faith is an accumulating thing, might well be presented with special force.

(1) There is first the man who cannot make up his mind whether or not Christianity is true. He listens to the objections that fly through the air wherever men meet, and often they strike him as very grave, very formidable. Some day he meets an older friend whose Christian character he trusts, and to him he states carefully the objections he has heard or thought of for himself. And his friend's answer seems to him a very poor one, very unconvincing. He goes away feeling as if there were less in Christianity than ever. But may we not remonstrate?

What we have to do, if we are successfully to turn down the gospel of Jesus Christ, is to prove absurd not some hasty or nervous phrase in his explicit argument, but the man's communion with the Father—that great friendship which stretches back to his distant youth and by this time has set openly upon his nature the beauty of holiness.

(2) The other mind to which the cumulative power of believing experience may need to be suggested is the despondent man, the Christian whose heart misgives him as he looks out to the future. The advances of science depress him, they seem to threaten faith so darkly. Social unrest fills him with gloom, he cannot see any good hope for the world. At times he feels as if religion itself might lose its hold upon his heart, not because God is less loving or less true, but because he distrusts his own nature and has a secret fear that some day his faith may give out. Shall we not say to this man, Are you not shutting your eyes to the plain fact that you care far more for God than you suppose? It must be so, for He has led you and fed you all these years, you have spoken to Him in prayer and He has answered you, you have trusted Him for power to destroy sin and sin has been destroyed. You have been

living in His company so long ; whatever hard things you may feel about yourself, could you bear to part with Him ? You are not free to go. He has bound you to Himself so closely that now you must go on to the very end, and at heart you are well satisfied that so it shall be.

'Ye have not chosen me,' Christ said to His disciples near the end, 'but I have chosen you.' Manifestly that is true concerning the outset of the Christian life. God's own love or the example of good men and women may often lead a man into faith almost before he has had time to think. But, as life goes on, as experience becomes deeper, nothing grows more clear than this, that we *do* come to choose Him, and this at the last with an intensity of decision and longing that could bear no separation.

And if in some strange passing dream we could conceive the Father offering us release, then the memories of His love would come in upon us like a flood, and we should answer in the old words of settled deep affection : 'Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee ; for where thou goest I will go, and thy people shall be mine.'

¶ A number of years ago Sir Wilfred Grenfell, of Labrador, addressed five thousand boys in the city of London. Seaman, doctor of medicine, the real ruler of a wide province, the builder of hospitals and trading stations—those London boys devoured him with their eyes. They knew well that they were looking upon one of the greatest of Christ's captains. Grenfell told them of his work, and a fine modesty coloured every sentence. But as he drew to a close the river of faith and love burst like a surging torrent through its banks. 'I dare not close this address,' he flamed, raising his hand upward, 'I dare not close without saluting my Chief. I owe everything I am to my Lord Jesus Christ. Forty years ago I gave Him my allegiance and He gave me Himself, and with Himself the gift of everlasting life. Every day since He has lived in me and He has made me the sharer of His Spirit and His peace.'¹

¹ Alistair A. MacLean.

The Heart of a Stranger

Exod. xxiii. 9.—'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger : for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.'

THIS Hebrew word, which is here and throughout the Old Testament rendered 'stranger,' is a term of great interest, which affords a sidelight upon some customs and conditions of life amongst the ancient Israelites. It does not mean a passing stranger, who is here to-day and gone to-morrow. Nor does it necessarily mean a foreigner at all, in the sense of a non-Israelite. In the oldest time, *gēr*, for that is the word, meant a stranger who dwelt under the protection of a family or a tribe to which he did not belong. And then later the word came to carry a more general meaning, and it meant a person who lived in complete freedom in the midst of a community in whose customs he did not participate, and in whose privileges he did not share, a person who was absolutely free to manage his own life, and who was what we should call to-day an 'outsider from most of the things, probably all, to which the community attached importance.

Now concerning this stranger there is an injunction reiterated again and again in the Books of the Law, and it is an injunction, not of tolerance only concerning him, but an injunction of positive kindness.

¶ The Book of Leviticus is filled with concern for the outsider. No Israelite could ever reap his harvest or enter his vineyard at the time of fruit without remembering some things concerning the stranger. He knew that in his harvest field the gleanings were not for him, that in his orchard or his vineyard the fruit fallen of itself was not his, but was for the poor and the stranger. And the innate exclusiveness of man—the special exclusiveness of the Jew, perhaps—was checked by the remembrance of the perfect explicitness of his Law. 'If the stranger shall sojourn with thee in the land thou shalt do him no harm ; he shall be unto thee as homeborn : yea, though he be a stranger, thou shalt relieve him.' That was the Aliens' Act in pre-Christian times.

1. In this relationship between Israel and the stranger there is one great motive that is urged, one plea that is constantly repeated. The

admonitions to humanity are backed up by an appeal to memory. 'Thou shalt remember that thou wast a stranger in the land of Egypt.' That was an experience that had bitten very deeply into the nation's mind. They had known what exile was like, and the bitterness of its exclusions, the burdens of its bondage, and it was an experience with very valuable fruit. It affected both their relation to God and their relation to their fellows.

(1) They came out of that Egyptian experience realizing a new claim of God upon them. 'I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of bondage.' That is how the Ten Commandments begin. The claim of the Law stands upon the fact of redemption. The first word in the Ten Commandments is not 'Thou shalt not,' but 'Thou shalt'—'Thou shalt remember.' Redemption is first, law is afterward. These Commandments are not arbitrary decrees, they are the words of the Lord who had saved them from the house of bondage and who established His love upon them before He laid His yoke upon them.

(2) But it affected men also in their relation to their fellows. They could not be quite the same kind of neighbours afterwards. It left a deeper understanding of human disability, a more understanding compassion. You know the feelings of a stranger, you know what it is like in outward circumstances, in inward thinking, to be exiled, excluded, outsiders to much that now you know the beauty and value of. You have known what it is to look upon happiness you could not share, you have known what it is to long for interests in which you could not participate. 'Ye know the heart of a stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt,' therefore you will not make it harder for any one who is feeling such things, who happens to be among you, you will make it easier if you can. You remember what you were once, and what you might have been still. It will make you sympathetic and helpful to the stranger.

2. Let us consider the implication of this old word. 'Thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' Running round the outer edge of that injunction there is this lesson, that there is some good, at least, in our worst experiences for ourselves, and through us to other people.

Have you ever passed through any lengthy period when you were a stranger to health? Has it left any gain with you? It is a very hard thing for the well to understand the sick. For one thing, the external suggestions of illness are so misleading to people who are perfectly well. We all of us have a little knowledge of illness, which, if not a dangerous thing, is at least a very misleading thing. It is a very different thing to lose one's health for a little while than to be a stranger to health for long, long spaces. If we have ever had such an experience it has left us one thing at least, which nothing else could have given us, for we know now the heart of a stranger, seeing that we were strangers in that land of Egypt.

Have you ever had a space of time in your life when you were a stranger to success? Has there ever been any long period in your life when everything seemed to go wrong, when all purposes, honourable as you thought them, were thwarted by all manner of unexpected turns of circumstance entirely unanticipated, beyond any foresight of yours. If anybody has had such a space of time when it seems as if that was going on, there probably would be much loss to him, but there would be one gain, for ever after he will understand what it is to be a failure. If that experience is enlarging him—enlarging him in his understanding of his fellows, in his insight into the depths of human nature, then out of it he is getting what God meant him to get.

¶ Queen Victoria, in a letter to Lord Tennyson after the death of his eldest son wrote, 'I say from the depth of a heart which has suffered cruelly and lost almost all that it cared for and loved best, I feel for you, and I know what you and your dear wife are suffering.'

3. 'Ye know the heart of a stranger.' Do we? Well, in some senses we do. Strangers to health, to success, to happiness, yes, we understand them because these things are common to every class. But there are exclusions and exiles we have never shared, but which others feel. And there is a need deeper even than the experience of life, for we need something deeper than that to bridge the separations of class by an understanding sympathy. And deeper than the experience of life is the experience of Christ. To know Him and to enter into union with Him

is to be put into an intuitive and comprehensive sympathy.

When Jesus looked upon men He saw life, all its hopes and all its fears; He heard the unuttered, He suffered with it, He suffered for it. We shall never understand the words of Jesus if we read them as though they were abstractions spoken in a vacuum. The only way to understand the words of Jesus is to look where Jesus looked when He talked, to look, as He looked, into the very heart of common men and women. There have been many philosophies of life. Most of them have had this fault and failing, that though they were philosophies of life they did not know life; they never saw men and women; they went over their heads. And so toilers had no hope in their toiling, and sufferers had no new patience in their suffering. Then there came the heavenly wisdom that passed through the doorways of lonely homes and blessed little children and healed sick people and met men at their ploughing and their sowing, at their fishing and mending their nets, in their simplest joys and their simplest sorrows—and that was Jesus. It is one thing to deal with ideals, it is another thing to deal with hearts.

There are strangers to beauty. Do we despise them for that? Remember Maeterlinck's words, 'To despise is only too easy, not so to understand.' There are strangers to knowledge. Do not make it harder for them. Are there no realms of knowledge to which we are strangers? There are strangers to purity and refinement. Yes. Has there never come into our life some foul experience which has made us understand how sordid are the penalties of such an exile from purity? There are strangers to Christ and to the strength and hope and comfort of religion. Is it not because of the grace of God to us that we are not strangers also?

¶ Richard Baxter, in his *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, says this: 'It was God's argument to the Israelites to be kind to strangers because themselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. So we pity the stranger to Christ, to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because we were once strangers ourselves.'

¶ Those to whom the light of the gospel has come feel bound to do all in their power to send it to the people who still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. They know the sad heart of the stranger and the glad heart of the Lord's

redeemed, and their desire to propagate the truth as it is in Jesus throughout the whole world is expressed in the old familiar words:

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?

By every undeserved good which our own lives have ever known, by every deliverance from any bondage that has come to us, from every experience of alienation we have ever known or felt, above all by the redemption that we have in common with all men, there is a charge laid upon us on behalf of the impoverished and unprivileged. We are here not to receive, but to give. And to them that practise this there shall be no dull moment. As they walk to and fro to understand their fellows they will have the great companionship of Christ.

Vision and Feast

Exod. xxiv. 9-11.—'Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. . . . Also they saw God, and did eat and drink.'

'THEY saw the God of Israel.' The tribes had reached Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses, their captain, their prophet. Everything was in the rudimentary stage; a nation of Israel did not yet exist; a land of Israel was still a dream. The future, destined to be so famous, lay hidden; the present was taken up with a venture, heroic indeed, but all uncertain in its issues. At this rudimentary stage, however, one thing was gloriously certain; while all else was dim, this shone clearly; no doubt remained on the one point that really mattered. The leaders of the tribes, the best minds among them—'they saw the God of Israel.'

Elsewhere in the account of what happened at Sinai we are told that the majesty of Jehovah was veiled in cloud and darkness; there was earthquake and fire and the awful tones of a trumpet; none dare approach; Moses alone went up, and he into the cloud. But here it is entirely different. Moses and the elders stand in the holy calm of the house not made with

hands, built not in the clouds, but like a palace with splendid pavement; and there, enthroned in glory, they saw the God of Israel. We may take this to mean that they personally came to know God as their living Lord and King; and God revealed Himself not in His overwhelming majesty, but in such a way as man could see and understand, with a Divine condescension to man's capacity.

1. 'They saw God.' The Bible is a record of those, both men and women, who have had the vision of God. Moses, wandering one day in troubled mood along a lonely desert track, turned aside to see a bush on fire—and suddenly, almost before he realized what he was doing, he was putting off his shoes from his feet, and bowing his face to the earth, for the ground was holy: he saw God. Isaiah, standing in the temple, a young aristocrat and courtier who had lost his king, felt the very air beginning to tremble; and looking up, he saw that the place which had seemed so dim and empty a moment before was flooded with a supernatural glory now; 'in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.' John, the apocalyptist, exiled on Patmos for the faith of Christ, was worshipping in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, when suddenly like a trumpet shattering the silence a great voice pealed forth and cried, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last!' And turning swiftly round to find whence that strange voice came, he saw One whose eyes were like a flame of fire, whose face was as the sun shining in its strength: 'and when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead.' All through Scripture, from the garden where God walked with man in the cool of the day, to the Celestial City where the ransomed behold His glory, this is the refrain: 'Also they saw God.'

Is there anything our generation needs more urgently than to recapture that vision? It is simple truth to say that the prime necessity of the hour is a new discovery of God. As John Ruskin put it years ago, 'It is not the weariness of mortality but the strength of divinity which we have to recognize; and that is just what we now never recognize, but think that we are to do great things by help of iron bars and perspiration; alas! we shall do nothing that way, but lose some pounds of our own weight.' Or in the better and more downright words of Scripture, 'Where there is no vision, the people

perish.' Where there is no feeling for eternal things, any strutting upstart tyranny can devastate the world. There can be no recall to sanity, or equity, or peace, till there has been a recall to God.

Does that sound too vague, and general, and remote? Then let us bring it right home to ourselves. Where do we stand in this matter? Cardinal Newman once defined a religious man as 'one who has a ruling sense of God's presence.' Is that the background of our common days, of our thinking and our planning, of our work, our friendships, our leisure, our love—a ruling sense of a Divine pervading presence? Do we not feel that to reach some such steady awareness of the Divine must be by far the best and most important thing that can ever happen to us in this world? And to miss it, if it is attainable, must be the ultimate tragedy. It is lamentable that a man should go on working, year in and year out, and never see his work with the light of God upon it. It is sad beyond words that two people who fall in love should lose completely the greatest thrill and crowning glory of that experience—which is to see God in the heart of their love.

¶ Once when that famous surgeon, Lord Moynihan of Leeds, had been invited to operate before a distinguished group of fellow surgeons, some one asked him afterwards how he could possibly work with such a crowd around him. 'Well,' he said, 'it is like this: there are just three people in the theatre when I operate—the patient and myself.' 'Three?' said his friend, 'but that is only two. Who is the other?' And the surgeon answered, 'God.'

When Hazlitt was a young lad his mind was listless and inert, and his faculties unawakened. But it happened that one day Coleridge came to visit his father, and that evening young Hazlitt accompanied the poet for several miles on his homeward way. In one of his essays he tells what that walk meant for him—how it gave him a totally new world with far-stretching horizons, and opened up before him magic realms of thought and vision of which until then he had never even dreamed. But on all the high-roads of the spirit there is no encounter that so surely makes all things new as an encounter with the living God. That transforms life utterly and imparts to it a depth and dignity unknown before. It is far and away the most vital event that can ever happen to us. And

something like that is what had come to those men of Israel gathered on Mount Sinai's rugged slopes. 'Also,' runs the narrative, 'they saw God.'

2. But there is something more. 'They saw God, and did eat and drink.' How mysterious, how significant! The vision of God is followed by the meal in His presence. We cannot help thinking of that mysterious meal in the gospel, when the disciples saw the risen Lord on the shore of the lake in the early morning, and He bade them 'Come, break your fast.'

This eating and drinking by those Israelites who had just seen God suggests three things.

(1) It tells us, first, *something about the character of the God they saw.* It meant that they were beginning to see Him as a friendly God, a God in whose presence the simplest and most homely actions seemed right and fitting. Separated though they were by the waste of centuries from Christ's decisive disclosure of the friendliness of God, some glimmering of that wonderful truth was already dawning upon their minds. 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies': and to-day God Himself was the host, and they were children in a father's house. They were at home, and could be simple and natural: 'They saw God, and did eat and drink.'

¶ In *The Life of Temple Gairdner* it is told that one morning in the church at Cairo, before Communion, Gairdner was kneeling at the altar, praying for God's blessing on his people in the Sacrament, when a child stumped up quite close to his praying form, and passed into the vestry where he had left a toy. Some one afterwards made an apology, but Gairdner with a smile replied, 'I liked it! I thought the little fellow seemed so much at home in his Father's House.'

(2) Again, this meal in the presence of God, implies that these men had realized *a new fellowship with one another.* The communal meal, in ancient times, was a symbol of unity, a sign of fellowship between those who partook. And so doubtless it was here. They ate and drank together in token of the new and vital bond which had been established between them. Their vision of God resulted in a deepened fellowship amongst themselves.

It is not hard to understand why a religious experience should have that effect, or why men who have seen God should suddenly find them-

selves looking upon one another with a love not known before. The supreme instance, of course, is what happened in the Early Church. Those men, gathered in Jerusalem, had seen God in Jesus. The Word had been made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they had beheld His glory. He had lived, and died, and risen before their eyes; and now at Pentecost, the magnificence of His glory was overwhelmingly revealed. What was the result? The immediate result was the coming into being of a fellowship of matchless strength and beauty. Having seen God, they loved one another with a love which even yet makes the pages of the old story shine. Here was a fellowship that simply overflowed and obliterated all the age-long barriers of Jew and Gentile, and brought scorned barbarian, cultured Athenian, and elect Israelite to the same Holy Table together, with no shadow of difference among them at all. Here was a fellowship that set them to pray for one another, not only when they came together on the Lord's Day, but also in their own homes, to remember one another by name at the throne of grace; and there is nothing like that for reconciling differences and leading to a true community of mind and hand and heart.

There is no fellowship in the world like the fellowship of those who have had a common experience of Jesus. If the Church of to-day were shining and throbbing with that kind of fellowship what an impact it could make on this generation, and how it would go forth in the greatness of its strength, mighty to save! The fact is that if our fellowship with one another is defective, it is because there is something lacking in our fellowship with God. If our personal relationships are at the mercy of our likes and dislikes and preferences, if they are controlled by the apparatus of mental criticism, it is a sure sign that our relationship to God lacks reality and steadfastness. But what do all the deep divergences in the world amount to—Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free—when a man has found Christ and can say, 'Mine eyes have seen the King'? Surely in the fact of Christ there is far more to unite us than there can be anywhere else to sunder us! Men and women whose lives centre in a common experience of God cannot help being one. Always the vision creates the fellowship, and from the love of Christ the beloved

community springs. 'They saw God, and did eat and drink.'

(3) One other aspect of this wilderness meal remains to be observed. It meant *the signing of a covenant*. In those days it was a recognized method of proclaiming that a pact had been sealed and was now operative: the contracting parties would partake of food and drink together. The meal confirmed the covenant. Hence the text implies an act of deliberate self-commitment. It was those desert pilgrims' token of dedication to the high God of their salvation.

Can any of us see God, as He has come to us in Christ, and not seek to give ourselves to Him, to fulfil His will for ever? Can we see Jesus on the Cross, despised, rejected, reviled, yet reviling not again; bearing shame and insult unspeakable, yet never answering except to pardon; enduring to the awful end because He was so sure that evil's monstrous triumph would be its ultimate defeat, and that if His heart broke, the very breaking of it might be the mending and the healing of the world—can we look upon that and not want to give ourselves to be mastered and gripped by a grace so wonderful and mighty?

O Christ, Love's Victim, hanging high
Upon the cruel Tree,
What worthy recompense can I
Make, mine own Christ, to Thee?

My sweat and labour from this day,
My sole life, let it be,
To love Thee aye the best I may
And die for love of Thee.¹

The Pattern of the Mount

Exod. xxv. 40.—'And see that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been shewed thee in the mount' (R.V.).

It is one of the assured results of Bible study that the Pentateuch is composed of different documents of widely varying dates. One of these is called the Priestly Document. It comprises the Book of Leviticus and various sections in the other Books. One section in the Book of Exodus, from chapter xxv. to xxxi., describes the Tabernacle and its furniture. The story was written after the Temple was

¹ St Aloysius.

built, and written from the point of view of the Priestly school. What the Israelites had in the wilderness was probably no more than a tent of meeting. This became glorified in the Priestly account long afterwards into a Tabernacle built at the express command of God, and literally after a pattern, every detail of which had been supplied by God Himself.

In the original setting of the text we have little interest. But these striking words have another suggestion for us.

1. Beneath all existence is a certain *Order*, to which all life must conform. We can take some common illustrations. An experimenter is trying to find some kind of amalgam which will answer a practical purpose of hardness, or toughness, or lightness. He tries combining all kinds of materials in various proportions, until at last he hits upon just the right thing. He has come across the secret of Nature. Nature ordained that this one combination should have the required property.

Nature herself has been carrying on this kind of process in her evolutionary growth. She has been making experiments of life for millenniums. Numberless forms have been produced and have perished, because they did not conform to a mysterious law of existence in the universe. The wrong types came to an end. Only those forms of life which corresponded with Nature herself persisted. The ever-working loom of an evolutionary God, by the holding or the failing of a thread, is showing us that creation is according to pattern. Conformity to this mysterious *Order* in the physical realm means existence and persistence; lack of harmony with it means failure and death.

Or take another illustration, provided by Matthew Arnold's poem *Revolutions*.

Before man parted for this earthly strand,
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,
God put a heap of letters in his hand,
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And man has turn'd them many times; made
Greece,
Rome, England, France;—yes, nor in vain
essay'd

Way after way, changes that never cease!
The letters have combined, something was made.

But ah ! an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what he
should ;

That he has still, though old, to recommence,
Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And empire after empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on ;
Have felt their huge frames not constructed
right,
And droop'd, and slowly died upon their
throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear
The word, the order, which God meant should
be.

—Ah ! we shall know *that* well when it comes
near ;

The band will quit man's heart, he will breathe
free.

Thus, in experimental science, in the process
of evolution, in the rise and fall of empires,
we get testimonies to the existence of a Divine
pattern to which the types brought into being
must conform or ultimately perish.

2. So we are led to recognize the Divine
pattern in moral life. Just as Nature has been
making numberless experiments in her process
of evolution, and only the right ones have
succeeded, so the soul is making her experi-
ments of life—the good life, the selfish life,
the life of love, the life of ambition, the life of
self-control, the life of indulgence, and so on.
God has given the soul her materials for these
many experiments, and here is the world trying
them. But, in spite of the many Divine possi-
bilities of human action, none but those in
conformity with the Divine order, the sacred,
hidden, pattern, will ultimately succeed. One
man chooses the life of self-aggrandisement,
and, by and by, finds it has become devoid
of any satisfaction. One man chooses a life
of self-indulgence, and after a fierce flame of
delirious pleasure the fires sink down among
the whitening ashes of a wasted life. Physical
weakness, feebleness of will, poverty of soul,
the sense of shame and remorse—what does
it all mean ? Nature is showing that this man
has been living according to a false pattern.
He has been out of harmony with the infinite
and eternal. A man chooses a life of worldli-

ness and seems, perhaps, to have crushed out
the idea of the other-worldly life. But Nature
suddenly shows the falseness of the pattern.

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.

In life, as in the maze of a pleasure-ground,
there are many paths, but only one right one.
The rest, offering apparently a clear course,
lead only into blind alleys. Our experience of
living is just one long process of elimination
—narrowing ourselves down to the one true
course of life, conforming to the Divine pattern,
the hidden sacred Order. We must come back
to that in tears if we refuse at the outset to
accept it willingly.

¶ Bunyan's two pilgrims had the freedom to
wander off into By-path Meadow, but it led
them to Doubting Castle and Giant Despair.
Delayed, tortured, stricken with remorse, they
had painfully to retrace their steps to the King's
Highway. The pilgrims were compelled after-
wards to confess :

Out of the way we went, and then we found
What 'twas to tread upon forbidden ground.

3. How do we know the way, the truth, and
the life ? We can tell it when we get up on
the heights of the soul. The world may come
only slowly and painfully to the best types of
living, but once discovered, the soul instinctively
recognizes these. Spiritual health is as obvious
an experience as physical health. We know
when we are in tune with the Infinite.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !

But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,

When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing

Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

What things seem right and wrong to us in
those seasons when we feel nearest God ? Take
the questionable practice, the unclean thought,

the selfish life, the mean way of thinking and acting—on the ordinary level of common conventional life, these may pass muster; but take them up into the mountains of the soul—how do they look now? And how does the deed of unselfishness look now—our effort of kindness, the word of truth bravely spoken at a time when it was not easy, the principle that kept us from the fatally easy course our fellows were taking—how do these things look now, as we stand upon the mountain, with the light of God on our face? Do we not say, 'Thank God, who gave me grace to do the right thing,' for now we know it is the right thing: we have seen the pattern of the universe upon the mountain-top again!

We must leave that summit, as Jesus and the disciples left the Mount of Transfiguration. The necessary valley waits us, but the memory of the vision and pattern can remain in our souls. It is not good for us to build tabernacles upon the mountain of vision.

No, said the Lord, the hour is passed. We go; Our home, our life, our duties lie below. While here we kneel upon the mount of prayer The plough lies waiting in the furrow there. Here we sought God that we might know His will;
There we must do it—serve Him, seek Him still.

The Names on Aaron's Breastplate

Exod. xxviii. 29.—'And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.'

1. WHEN we consider the High Priest of the ancient confession, we may say of his liturgical ornament that the breastplate upon his heart was a sort of book of remembrance of the people for whom he had to pray; for upon each precious stone the name of one of the tribes was inscribed, and when he drew near under the wings of the Shekinah the mysterious light of the sanctuary fell upon his breastplate and the names sprang into light along with the glory of the jewels upon which they were written.

(1) The High Priest thus carried with him the body corporate of Israel: the 'whole

family,' if we may put it so, was there—that is, the whole family as understood in that day. Since then the praying soul has become more imperial; it has become easier to detect consanguinity in one another. The bounds of our spiritual habitation have been enlarged. But, from Aaron's point of view, his prayer was comprehensive. It took in all the people; it surveyed the length and breadth of Immanuel's land; it flew from east to west and from the north to the south. He did not leave out the tribe of Dan because the Antichrist was to come from thence, nor forget little Benjamin because he was little. His prayer for peace and his benediction of peace was in the manner of the Psalmist, 'Peace upon Israel'; and St Paul only bettered it by extending the connotation of Israel, 'Peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God.'

It is no small grace to have our prayers all right, as far as they go; a defect which is only undue contraction is easily mended. The exhortation that prayers be made for all men is only a corollary to the doctrine and duty of love to all men. 'Thou shalt pray for thy neighbour as thyself,' says the Spirit.

¶ In the biography of J. Denholm Brash, the saintly Wesleyan Methodist minister, his son tells us how he came across a little book one day in which his father kept the names of those for whom he prayed, and the day of the week on which he interceded for them. 'It was a revelation to me—for one would have thought that many of those names had been forgotten by him years before. There was a great unity in the list; they all sorely needed the Divine help. Each worker of the Church on the Foreign Field was also remembered by him. With the map before him he interceded for the many nations of the world. An atlas was his book of campaigns; it told him of countries that must be won for Christ.'

(2) The High Priest carried the names of the tribes upon his heart. Amongst them, not inconspicuous or forgotten, was the tribe to which he himself belonged. The Book of Family Prayer was bound up in the volume of the Common Prayer. And there are intimations in the New Testament that certain forms of appeal in this part of the book have a spiritual right of way. Here is a bit out of an old family Prayer Book: 'Lord, I beseech Thee to have mercy upon my son, for he is horribly

'bedevilled.' And here is another: 'My little daughter is even now at the point of death; come and lay Thy hand on her and she shall live.'

Abraham's greatness was not merely in his believing God, and having it counted to him for righteousness, but in the fact that he claimed something more than the promise. The Lord hung round his neck a precious promise, an elect promise. It was engraven with the art of the jeweller in words to shine through the ages, 'Blessed be Isaac.' 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called.' And the man was not satisfied with his gift. He began to suggest that another stone might be given him as a pendant to his chief ornament. 'Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!' said he. It was an enlarged edition of the Prayer Book, but no doubt there was a blank page left for it in the Book of the Covenant, for it is written, 'Concerning Ishmael also I have heard thee.'

(3) Under the same head of tribal and family intercessions we must group his prayers for himself, for how could he invoke a blessing on Levi, and be himself outside the blessing of Levi?

And it was not in any secondary sense that these prayers were offered. The Epistle to the Hebrews suggests that they were first-rank prayers. 'He offered up sacrifice, *first for himself*, and then for the errors of the people.' We are to lift up hands of prayer, 'both for *ourselves* and those who call *us* friend.' It is not ridiculous that a man should lie upon his own heart. Peter was upon his own heart when he cried, 'Lord, save me.' And the poor woman in the gospel prayed for herself and her daughter in quite a confusing way: 'Lord,' she said, 'have mercy upon me, my daughter,' etc. And when she is repelled she cries out, 'Lord, help me.' Is that tribal praying, or does it not rather mean that she presented her own soul intercessionally with her daughter's?

2. As we are instructed in the Epistle to the Hebrews to consider the great High Priest of our confession we may ask the question whether Jesus wore a breastplate of the Aaronic model, or similar to it.

There are some things in the New Testament which suggest that the twelve tribes of Israel were replaced by the twelve Apostles of the Lamb in the early tradition. We remember,

for example, how the writer of the Apocalypse has imitated the stones of the breastplate in the foundations of the city, and how he says these foundations are the apostolic men, no more and no less! And there is no doubt of the nearness to Christ of those whom He had specially chosen to be with Him. But then we must not press this numerically, for two reasons: first, because if we emphasize the grouping of men around the Lord too closely, we shall find an inner circle of three or four within the twelve; and second, because we shall find an outer circle beyond the twelve, betrayed sometimes by a stray expression like 'Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.' And sometimes the disclosure is made of an infinitely wider constituency of love and service, as when the Master says, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them that shall believe through their word.' We may say of Christ's intercession that it was a capacious breastplate upon a universal heart. The length and breadth of the Lord is not measured on the same scale as the length and breadth of Aaron.

We can see Him clothing Himself with this breastplate along with the other high-priestly vestments; we can see Him studying each individual stone. This one will fall out and be broken, but 'I have prayed for thee, Simon'; and this one will fall out and be lost altogether, being a Son of Loss.

Surely it is right to say that Jesus regarded each separate stone, and the whole breastplate of them, as the Father's gift to Him. As such He received them, and as such He remembers them; or, as the writer to the Hebrews says, 'He ever liveth to intercede for them.'

¶ Many of us had once those who prayed for us, who remembered us before the Throne. What a joy and strength it was to know it! But perhaps those who prayed for you have been long since gathered to their rest. Perhaps you are not sure that any one in all the world prays now for you by name. But, blessed be God, the great Intercessor never pauses. One clear, prevailing voice is heard before the Throne, and when we do not pray for ourselves, and when no fellow-being prays for us, Christ does not forget to pray.¹

3. And now we must say a word about our own breastplates, and the particular inter-

¹ W. Robertson Nicoll.

cessions in which our love of souls involves us. It raises in our minds a number of interesting questions, such as the following: How big a breastplate can we wear? How many souls can we carry? Have we as many as twelve that we never forget? Are we sure of one that we always remember? And amongst those whose remembrance is always with us, of how many can we say that we are as sure of being on their breastplates as they are of being on ours?

A knowledge of the meaning and scope of intercessional grace will help us to understand both the beauty of souls and our ownership in them. We must always think nobly of the soul, and we shall only be able to do this as we continue in prayer and abound in the same with thanksgiving.

Let's prize their Souls, and let them be our
Gems,

Our Temples and our Diadems,
Our Brides, our Friends, our Fellow-Members,
Eyes,

Hands, Hearts and Souls, our Victories,
And Spoils and Trophies, our own Joys!
Compared to Souls, all else are Toys.

O Jesus, let them be.

Such unto us as they are unto Thee,
Vessels of glory and felicity.

The Mercy of God

Exod. xxx. 2.—'The horns thereof shall be of one piece with it' (R.V.).

1. THERE are two altars referred to in the description of the Tabernacle. One was known as the brazen altar, or altar of burnt offering. All sacrifices were offered at this altar, and its position directly in front of the door of the Tabernacle taught distinctly that man has no right of approach to God except as a sinner atoned for by blood. The other altar, which was overlaid with gold, stood in the holy place in front of the veil that hung before the mercy seat, and was known as the golden altar, or altar of incense. On this altar incense of prescribed ingredients, lighted by fire from the brazen altar, was burned morning and evening. The offering of incense was a symbol of the

acceptable adoration of God by the prayers of His people.

Both altars were provided with horns, or projections, at the corners, but the precise significance of these horns is not quite clear. They may have served the purpose of ornament, for they are sometimes seen on heathen altars; but among the Jews they were smeared with the blood of sacrificial victims, and in the case of the brazen altar they may have been used for binding the animal until the time came for its slaughter. Apparently also the horns were meant to be grasped by any unfortunate man who, having taken the life of another, was in danger from the pursuit of 'the avenger of blood.' Fleeing for refuge to the altar of God, the shedder of blood, if he could reach the altar in time and grasp its horns, was safe, unless he had been guilty of wilful murder; 'if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.'

It is clear that the horns of the altar were regarded as possessing special sanctity; 'in a sense the efficacy of the altar was concentrated there.' And some real significance must lie in the fact that the horns were to be of one piece with the altar. Four times in the Book of Exodus this direction is given that the horns should be 'of one piece' with the altar—not fastened on after the altar was made, but part of the metal, so that they could not be broken off, or come away in the hand, or be missing. May we not find a spiritual meaning in this fact?

2. The whole ritual of the Mosaic Law was evidently intended to induce the worshippers to think of the mercy of God, and to cast themselves upon it. That ritual was calculated to make an indelible impression on the mind and heart of the Israelites, enabling them to realize in some measure the awful distance between God and man—God in His transcendent greatness and holiness, man in his insignificance and sinfulness. The wonderful dealings of God with His chosen people, the smoke of Jewish altars, the teachings of Hebrew prophets, all bore witness to these great truths of God's greatness and man's littleness. They were so ground into their minds and hearts that lowly reverence and godly fear seemed to them the only fitting position to be taken by a human

being in the presence of God. And very specially they were led to look back to God's mercy in the past, to look up to God's mercy in the present, and to look forward to God's mercy in the future.

It is a most instructive exercise to take up a Bible concordance and trace out the occurrences of the great words 'mercy' and 'merciful,' as applied to God. These words seem to appear on almost every page of the Bible. God Himself proclaims His name as 'the Lord God, merciful and gracious,' 'shewing mercy unto thousands.' His mercy, says the Psalmist, reaches to the heavens. It is an accompaniment of nearly every other Divine attribute and action; we find coupled together goodness and mercy, faithfulness and mercy, mercy and truth, mercy and judgment. This wonderful side of God's nature is constantly presented to man by way of solemn reminder and gracious encouragement. He is abundant in mercy, says the Old Testament. He is rich in mercy, says the New Testament. His mercy guides all the doings of God, and covers all the experiences of men; 'all the paths of the Lord are mercy.' It protects the weakest of His children—'in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' It extends to the heathen mass of Nineveh, and even to their dumb cattle, for 'His tender mercies are over all His works.' It is without beginning and without end; 'the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.' His mercy is man's one security; 'it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.' And so it is that in the New Testament mercy is joined with grace and peace in apostolic salutations; the great God Himself is described by St Paul as 'the Father of Mercies'; and the Apostle makes these mercies the solemn ground of one of his strongest appeals for right living (Rom. xii. 1). Not without reason has it been said that we shall probably never know in this life what we owe to the mercy of God.

The Authorized Version of the Bible, and even the Revised Version, uses this great word 'mercy' in a rather loose way as a translation of four distinct Hebrew words and ideas. Only one of these Hebrew ideas corresponds strictly to our word 'mercy,' which, as we use it to-day, means sparing a wrongdoer. And that is most certainly part of the Divine mercy; to clear a sinner of guilt is one of God's great acts of

mercy—no doubt the greatest of them all. But the Old Testament also includes under the head of mercy three other things: God's tender mercy, or compassion for man's misery and helplessness; God's loving kindness and generosity to man's poverty and needs; and God's faithfulness and loyalty, on which man may confidently rely. May we not say that these four most precious truths are the very foundation of all our hopes? May we not say that these are the four horns of the altar, to which we may cling in life and death—God's pity, God's kindness, God's faithfulness, God's forgiveness?

God is merciful—that is He is pitiful, kind, faithful, and forgiving. Pitiful—for 'like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' And kind—for He 'crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.' And faithful—'the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy.' And, above all, forgiving: 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever; because He delighteth in mercy.' These are the thankful confessions, not only of Old Testament saints, but of believing men and women in all ages, who have tasted and seen God's goodness, who have found shelter and peace in God's mercy.

Great God of wonders! All Thy ways
Are worthy of Thyself—Divine;
But the bright glories of Thy grace
Beyond Thine other wonders shine.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
And who has grace, so rich and free?

3. We may not be able to comprehend the nature of God, but we can all apprehend the mercy of God. We, who know so little of ourselves, must confess the unfathomable mystery of His nature, but this much we do know, and it is enough—His mercy comes forth to meet us. The sceptre of mercy is held out to us to touch, the horns of the altar are within our reach to grasp. With far more clearness and certainty than any Old Testament believer, we can lay hold on the mercy of God in all its fullness. Even in his ordinary approaches to God the wilderness worshipper's heart was often filled with dread and doubt

in the presence of his God. At Sinai so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake.' Nor could the worshipper be sure of finding full understanding and sympathy in the priest, for the priest 'himself also is compassed with infirmity, and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.' How different it is with us. We have a merciful and faithful high priest, One who is able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Therefore, we may draw near with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy. And apprehending the mercy of God in Christ, we can say with St Paul: 'He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?' Yes, 'all things,' but specially the things that weak, needy, desolate, and sinful men and women most need—God's pity, God's kindness, God's fidelity, God's forgiveness.

On the 1st of June 1879, the Prince Imperial of France, fighting for England in South Africa, lost his life in a Zulu ambush. When his foes rushed out of their hiding-place he attempted to leap on to his horse's back, but the flap of the saddle gave way, and he fell back amongst their spears. Perhaps it was true of him that—

Betwixt the saddle and the ground,
He mercy sought and mercy found.

But no man who takes hold in simple faith of our Father's pity, kindness, faithfulness, and forgiveness, can ever perish. The promises are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. If ever one of them gave way, God's whole throne, His entire kingdom, His very existence, would give way, too. For they are all 'of one piece.'

On Dressing Lamps

Exod. xxx. 7.—'And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.'

It is significant to notice that for the dressing of lamps Aaron had instructions. That menial and lowly duty was brought into relationship to God. That he should have orders about the *lighting* of the lamps is what we naturally

should expect. For the lamps of the tabernacle were rich in meaning, and the lighting of them was symbolical. But the striking thing is that the unseen Orderer, who ordained the lighting of the lamps, gave close and heavenly regard as well to the duties that lay behind the lighting. There were no spectators for the dressing. It was a humble and unnoticed duty in the regular routine of the day. Yet every time that Aaron dressed the lamps, in the seclusion of the empty tabernacle, he was commanded to burn incense on the altar.

1. The first suggestion of that order was one that has its meaning for us all. It brought the common and uninspiring duty into immediate relationship with God. That burning of incense spoke of God, who was living, and not far away. Why kindle it if, in that silent place, One was not present to detect its fragrance? As it curled upward it carried the heart upward to Him who was continually present, though clouds and darkness were about His throne. There were hours when such reminder was not needed. Aaron had hours eloquent of God, when he could no more doubt the presence of Jehovah than he could doubt the shining of the stars. But in the hours of dreary daily drudgery, in the commonplace routine of common days, it was very different from that. Heaven was very apt to fade away then. It was difficult to realize the infinite. The monotony of daily duty deadened the aspirations of the soul. And there is something beautifully tender and rich in the grace of heavenly compassion that just *then* Aaron was commanded to kindle the incense on the altar. It brought God and drudgery together. It encircled with spiritual fragrance the unilluminated task of every day. It suggested that there was some relationship only to be revealed in the Lord Jesus between the altar which always spoke of heaven and the ordinary dressing of a lamp.

This redeeming and beautiful relationship is one of the vital marks of Christianity. Christ brings heaven near the common duty, and gives loftiest motives for the lowliest tasks. Our Christian faith is like Jacob's ladder, reaching heavenward not from hallowed places, but from the rugged slopes of ordinary life. It is difficult for us to realize how different it was in paganism. In paganism the gods stood far apart from the daily round of ordinary toil.

Now it is Immanuel, God with us, whether we work in the kitchen or the coal-pit, or with the monotonous tapping of the typewriter. Everything may be done for Jesus' sake. Every duty may be linked with heaven. We may find His body in a piece of bread. We may give a cup of water in His name. All which was symbolized for Aaron when he was bidden to have the altar glowing in his drudgery of dressing lamps.

'Jesus, Saviour, dost Thou see
When I'm doing things for Thee?
Common things, not great and grand,
Carrying stones, and earth and sand?'

'I did common work, you know
Many, many years ago;
And I don't forget. I see
Everything you do for Me.'

2. But that incense had a narrower meaning. It was typical and symbolical of prayer. It may be that in dim and distant days incense was not symbolical at all. It may be that the very fragrance of it was itself regarded as pleasing to the deity. But gradually, as worship grew more spiritual, and the thought of God was deepened and enriched, the incense that rose heavenward from the altar spoke, to the attentive heart, of prayer. It was not something material and coarse. It was a thing of fine and subtle essence. And it mounted heavenward as if aspiring thither, spite of everything that interposed. Yet, mounting so, it interfused itself with the whole neighbourhood, and was a source of delight to men. It was thus that it became symbolical, speaking to the pious heart of prayer.

¶ Incense has been used from time immemorial in India in simple household ways. You throw a few grains on burning charcoal and a column of smoke rises straight up. Any one coming into the room notices the fragrance long after the smoke has disappeared. It fills the room, floats out through the open doors and windows, and for an hour or so, if the air be still, you are aware of it about the house. I never watch that white column of smoke, laden with its own peculiar fragrance, without a grateful thought of that of which it is the figure.¹

¹ Amy Carmichael.

The kindling of the incense was a *daily* thing. At stated hours, as each day came round, it was the duty of the priest to set it burning. There were sacrifices that were offered at rare intervals; this sacrifice was not one of these. And so God teaches us the place of prayer, and how He expects it to be our daily office, and how He wants us to use it every day in the consecration of the common toil.

¶ 'Until we realize,' writes Evelyn Underhill, 'that it is better, more useful, to spend, let us say, the odd ten minutes in the morning in feeling and finding the Eternal than in flicking the newspaper—that this will send us off to the day's work really endowed with new power of dealing with circumstances—we have not yet begun to live the life of the Spirit or found the power of doing our best work, whatever it may be.'

There are hours when our deepest need is God. We feel that without Him we are helpless. But how many are there who feel their need of Him for the ordinary tasks of every day? And what a message it would bring to Aaron that he was bidden to set the altar glowing, when duty summoned him to dress the lamps. What! must the heart be prayerful for *that*? Did he need Divine assistance to trim wicks? For such a menial task of every day was there any call for arrow-flights to heaven? And then one remembers how He who was to come, and who walketh amid the golden candlesticks, taught (what Aaron only learned in symbol) that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint. Great moments come but rarely in life. We spend the most of life in dressing lamps for the supreme moments of their kindling. What an unused altar ours will be unless we kindle it, as Aaron had to do, for the lowly common task of dressing lamps.

Why Burn Incense?

(For the Young)

Exod. xxx. 8.—'And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense . . .'

WE have many advantages in our day and generation which men and women, boys and girls, of other days had not. Some such advantages, even the commonest, we sometimes tend

to take for granted. For example, on a dark wintry night when all daylight has gone and we are in need of light in order to get school lessons and other things done, what need we do but put a match to the gas or switch on our electric light. But there was a day when houses were not fitted with gas and electricity. Folks had to read and work by the light of lamps. Some of us may have holidayed in country places where lamps are still in use and while we may have found their light both good and pleasant we have noted that lamps require attention occasionally, must be refilled with oil and be periodically cleaned. Those who have known nothing other or better than lamps possibly think little of the work they involve, but we who know the blessings of gas and electricity would find it rather trying I am afraid.

In Old Testament times lamps of a kind were used. But it was not so pleasant to sit and read and work by them as it is by the lamps which are still in use to-day. And for a very simple reason. In those far-off days the oil was of a very poor quality. When the lamps were lighted it gave off a very unpleasant odour. Such lamps, in which oil of this kind was burned, were used not only in the homes of the people but also in the churches, and you can understand how, had no provision been made to counteract it, the unpleasant odour given off by the oil must have disturbed those who came to worship. But such provision was made. 'And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even,' it was decreed, 'he shall burn incense.' Incense had a beautiful odour, sweet smelling and pleasant, and it was realized that by burning incense an odour so pleasing would be spread throughout the church that the unpleasantness of the odour of the poor oil would be entirely forgotten.

There is something in that Old Testament practice which has a message for us to-day.

Some of us are called occasionally to perform *duties which we regard as unpleasant*. It seems a trifle hard, for example, that we should be asked to wash and dry dishes instead of being allowed out to play. We grumble all the time, say hard things under our breath about the world in general and certain people in particular, and create a very unpleasant atmosphere for ourselves and for all who are near us. But

not so are difficult duties best done. Instead of grumbling, we should burn incense—try, in other words, to think of the help we are rendering some one, of how, by our assistance, we are making things easier for some one who has too much to do. Tackling unpleasant duties in such a fashion we shall be surprised at how easily they are done.

Besides having unpleasant duties to do, some of us have *unpleasant experiences*. Perhaps we have worked particularly hard for some examination and have failed. How despondent and disappointed and heartsick we feel. We could there and then give up the struggle. But is this not another instance in which we should burn incense? We have failed, but what about the successes we have had, and the successes we shall have provided we work with a will? It is difficult when failure comes to keep one's head. But it can be done, and failure can be turned into success if we are careful to burn our incense.

Some of us as we pass through life make contact with certain *unpleasant people* who speak carelessly and think unfairly and act selfishly. Sometimes, because we think of such people long and often, we persuade ourselves that the majority of men and women and boys and girls are like them. But that isn't true. Whenever we make contact with an unpleasant person let us burn incense—think, in other words, of some of the pleasant people we have met, for all of us have met pleasant people who by their courtesy and kindness make life a different thing. So doing we shall overcome the influence of the unpleasant people as the unpleasant odour of the oil was overcome by the sweet-smelling odour of the incense.

Unpleasant duties and unpleasant experiences and unpleasant people will meet all of us as we go through life. But we needn't be defeated by them or even discouraged by them. We can overcome them all if we recall and act upon the advice given to Aaron when, fulfilling his duties, he lighted the lamps in church at even.

RODERICK BETHUNE.

The Golden Calf

Exod. xxxii. 1, 24.—‘And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us. . . . And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me : then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.’

At first sight it seems almost inexplicable that the Israelites at Horeb should commit an act of apostasy which the Psalmist so graphically depicts in the 106th Psalm : ‘They changed their glory for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt.’ It was but a few weeks since they saw God manifesting Himself in thunders and lightnings as their Legislator. They had just heard the Divine injunction that they should have no other gods before the Lord, nor fashion any graven image, as an object of worship. Yet almost in the same breath in which they exclaimed : ‘All that the Lord hath said we will do and hear,’ they said of an ox that eateth grass, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.’ Neither the Divine revelation itself, nor the impressive circumstances in which it was made, appear to have exerted any real impression upon the people.

1. We are told that ‘when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us.’ In this short statement we may detect one of the causes that led to Israel’s apostasy. The Moses whom they missed was not the real Moses, the emissary of God, the people’s guide and leader ; it was not his religious and moral teaching that they missed. Moses appeared to their limited intelligence as being a mere miracle-worker who marched at the head of their armies, and whom they followed by a sort of mechanical obedience. Otherwise they felt no particular interest in him. There was no bond of sympathy between them and him, such as should unite the leader and the led. They failed to recognize what Moses stood for, what his leadership of them meant. At most they had but a confused conception of the purpose of

his mission, the ideals for which he had sacrificed himself. The relation in which they stood to their leader is already implied in the callous language in which they describe him, as if he were a stranger to their lives : ‘This man Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we know not what has become of him.’ As their idea of Moses was coarse and unspiritual, so was the embodiment they gave to their crude conceptions of Divine leadership. Moses was out of sight ; therefore, ‘Up, make us something we can see, some embodiment of Deity that shall go before us, and bring us to the land to which we journey.’ Their material minds depended entirely upon some tangible evidence of the Divine presence, as generations long after them asked for signs and symbols, without which they would not believe.

2. The courage of Aaron did not rise to meet the occasion. He knew as well as we do what he should have said, but, like many another man in influential position, when beset by popular clamour, he was cowed and yielded when he should have set his face like a flint. It may be, that he adopted measures which, as he thought, would gain time by delaying the revolt till Moses should descend the Mount. Possibly, he counted on the unwillingness of the people to sacrifice their much-prized ornaments of gold. Or he may have thought to convince the people how childish and absurd was their notion. For childish indeed was the thought that out of the earrings of their wives and children, they could fashion a leader who would guide them through the wilderness. Certain it is that the man who was presently chosen to be the nation’s priest, and to minister in God’s sanctuary, could not have shared their absurd beliefs. It is not impossible that the part ascribed to Aaron is intended by those who shaped this story of the golden calf as a reflection upon the subserviency to popular wishes which has often been a weakness of priesthood. What was it that the Israelites demanded ? What is it that the people have always demanded in place of the true worship of the true God, who reveals His will in the imperishable code of Sinai ? ‘Gods who shall go before us’ ; who will demand nothing of us ; towards whom we shall incur no responsibility, for they are our own creation. And all this happens in the absence of Moses, and while

the God-appointed leader of the people carries with the tables of the testimony. For it is ever in the absence of truth that falsehood prevails, when those who should speak the word of God are silent that other voices make themselves heard.

¶ It is usual to wax sarcastic about Aaron's subsequent apologia, '*there came out this calf.*' But in this he showed himself a good psychologist, and if that doesn't recommend him to us and exonerate him, nothing will. Many of the follies and most of the crimes of men do, in fact, happen rather than are intended. The vase breaks in the maid's hand. We drift into war. 'They know not what they do' was not only a merciful plea, it was a statement of one of the laws of life.

3. In default of a God whom they could see the Israelites turned to the golden calf. We make a big mistake in under-rating Mammon. He is at least God's most formidable rival. Gold means power, comfort, security; it means our opportunity in some measure at least to play the part of god ourselves. It is obvious from the vehemence and constancy of His warnings that Christ saw gold as the subtlest of spiritual perils.

¶ Colton's *Lacon* has these words on the subject: 'Those who worship gold in a world so corrupt as this we live in, have at least one thing to plead in defence of their idolatry—the power of their idol. It is true that, like other idols, it can neither move, nor see, nor hear, nor feel, nor understand; but, unlike other idols, it has often communicated all these powers to those who had them not, and annihilated them in those who had. This idol can boast of two peculiarities: it is worshipped in all climates, without a single temple; and by all classes, without a single hypocrite.'

The desert fiasco is widely and solemnly being re-enacted and played over again everywhere in the contemporary world. Their false choice landed those poor nomads in tears and blood; it has brought us to the same sorry pass. Gold is a false god; he glitters at first, but the glitter hides a diabolic grin and the affair ends up as a tragedy of blood and anguish. And if in any direction we need, all of us, those who are cunning enough to hide it as well as the rest, the warning of 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall,' it is surely in

this direction. It is only simpletons who think that they can be easily quit of one of the subtlest enemies of the soul.

¶ Mr Vincent Sheean, the American journalist, in his latest book, *Between the Thunder and the Sun*, tells that when he was in Paris in 1940 he called on M. Léon Blum after Mr Churchill had become Prime Minister. M. Léon Blum recalled some advice Mr Churchill had given to him at Maxine's *château* about what a young man entering politics should do. One of the first rules, Mr Churchill said, was to be careful not to value money too much. 'Yes, it is true,' M. Blum replied, '*M. Churchill n'a pas du tout l'âme capitaliste.*'

4. This revolt in the desert was a tragic affair. And yet there is something else here, something stronger and deeper. Man *must* worship. It is the way he is made. He cannot live entirely to himself; he must be loyal to something. The idolater vastly excels the egotist. And this capacity of man for loyalty, this need to worship something is as apparent to-day as it has ever been.

Enormous crowds assemble, queue up, and file past that tomb in the Red Square. The flower of young German manhood will throw itself away for the sake of one who seems to us an egregious mountebank, and now an obvious failure as well. Songs, then, in the desert, and their burden is glory to man; glory to that gullible, inconstant, perverse, and impatient creature who yet, and despite all, and deeper than all, has the right stuff, the Divine stuff in him.

Ascended—ascended no doubt on necessary business, but all the same ascended, remote, invisible—Moses was over the heads of the people. And that also has its counterpart among us. For the most part we have given the impression that religion is something apart, remote, exalted, precious. Our churches may be oases of peace to us, but to the masses they are as mysterious, as uninviting, as forbidding, possibly even as vaguely menacing, as Sinai's top. The people are not hostile to us. They just don't understand, don't think it is any business of theirs, and let it all severely alone accordingly. They turn, as turned their nomadic predecessors, to more obvious things, and those more obvious gods of theirs are gold, sport, sex, and films. For this they are to blame

and we are to blame, but in any case the nice distribution of blame is not what matters. What matters is to find the cure.

The golden calf came to grief. None of these ersatz deities will satisfy their devotees for ever. That is perhaps one of the few things of which we may feel confident. The truly Herculean task, no less, to which we are committed is to try to bridge the widening gulf between Church and people. We need to make it clear, somehow, that all this of ours is their affair, their interest, indeed vital and necessary to them. We have got to come down from the mountain. Fully and deeply convinced ourselves, we have got to make others see and know that God is as near at hand and as closely concerned with the desert of ordinary life, as with the purity, loftiness, and sanctity of remote and inaccessible heavens.

Jesus was the Son of Man, with the whole of human life, and the way—the only way—to live it, as His theme. 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' More life and fuller is the universal human need, and that is also the soul and substance of what we have, or should have, to offer.

Moral Neutrality

Exod. xxxii. 26.—'Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?'

IN the Laws of Solon, Plutarch tells us, there was an enactment, which Athens approved of as wise and safe, that in the event of an insurrection breaking out in the streets, those people should be put to death who merely looked on, who took no part in it, on one side or the other. It was a violent and dramatic way of saying that it is the first duty of a man and of a citizen to make his contribution to the moral purpose and achievement of the age in which he lives. That it is a crime for any one in the battle of life to be a mere spectator.

And the Bible from first to last takes that view. Where moral and spiritual issues are at stake it regards neutrality with a Divine abhorrence. 'I would thou wert cold or hot,' says Christ to the Laodiceans, 'I would thou hadst taken a clear stand upon one side. I should have more hopes of thee if thou wert

thoroughly in earnest, even if it were in the service of the adversary; but because thou art lukewarm—neither cold nor hot—what can I do but reject thee with contempt?' For always the battle between earth and heaven is being waged; it takes a thousand forms, moves to a thousand issues, clothes itself in the burning questions of the hour; and in *that* battle one thing that God abhors, and visits with His condemnation throughout the whole of Scripture, is the attitude of standing aloof and looking on.

¶ In his dispatch from Java shortly after the fall of Singapore, *The Times* correspondent contrasted the scene in that Malayan city with what was happening at the same time in the Russian capital. In the case of Singapore, the 700,000 Asiatics among its inhabitants were, with but few exceptions, apathetic spectators of a conflict in which they were not personally concerned; in Moscow every person felt that the struggle was his own and stood ready to give to it his all.¹

The man

Who is neutral in this fight is not
A man. He's bulk and body without breath,
Cold leg of lamb without mint sauce. A fool,
He makes me sick.²

1. 'Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side?'

There are many people in our day who have taken up what really amounts to an attitude of neutrality on the great issue as to the very meaning and purpose of our life. They are not hostile to that total view of life which we derive from Jesus Christ, that view which gives all things their root and background in God, that view which gives life at every moment a living meaning and charges all our actions with appropriate consequences—they are not hostile towards that view, but they are not enthusiastic about it. They are not in for it. They have so planned their lives that it would not greatly matter to them if—to put it boldly—the Christian religion should turn out to be false. They have no treasure in heaven for the sake of which they are poor on earth.

Of this class there are doubtless many who are not at ease in this careless and uncommitted way of living. For we were made to

¹ E. L. Allen.

² G. A. Studdert Kennedy.

love something with all our heart. We were made not for neutralities, not to balance ourselves between alternatives, but to give our whole strength to something. The danger is that, instead of yielding themselves up to the voice of their own uneasiness, which is just the voice of God, they begin to make excuses for themselves and to collect reasons why they are not living by some clear vision of God and duty. Now it is part of the great moral trial of our life that if we want to find reasons for doing or not doing something, for living in any kind of way—we can find the reasons. There is no more dangerous habit than the habit of reasoning and considering and weighing and delaying, with regard to something about which we feel all the time, and with our whole being, that we ought to get up and do it.

¶ All human life, we may say, consists solely of these two activities: (1) Bringing one's activities into harmony with conscience, or (2) hiding from oneself the indications of conscience, in order to be able to continue to live as before.¹

When a man stands up to-day before his fellows and says: 'Who is on the Lord's side?' of those who hear him there are many who will say to themselves—'not yet,' 'there's time enough'; for they see at once that the Lord's side means some restraint or contradiction of the life they have fallen into the habit of living. And so the sword of the Spirit simply strikes their armour and glances off. Then there are others, and if they are in earnest they are to be met with sympathy. When one rises and asks, 'Who is on the Lord's side?' they say, 'Ah, yes: but which is the Lord's side? How can I be sure? And even if I could be sure, still, in this immense and complicated world, does it really matter very much, does it matter at all, that I withhold the little I can do?'

2. Now, when all is said, Jesus Christ has not been preached among us quite in vain. Most people know, unless they are trying to deceive themselves, that there are two ways of living, two ways of addressing ourselves to life. We all of us know, clearly enough to make us responsible for our decisions, that there is a way of living which puts us on the Lord's side and a way of living which puts us on the other

side. And any one who proposes to take no side, has already taken the other side: for any one who is content with things as they are, either within himself or in the world, belongs already to the other side.

¶ When the constituents of James A. Garfield wished him to vote in the American Senate contrary to the dictates of his conscience, and when Garfield stood before them and said: 'Gentlemen, if I become your representative, it must be because your opinions coincide with mine, and not because I have pared mine down into similarity with yours; I must obey the dictates of my conscience; for obedience to its voice I am responsible to God, and I must not, I dare not, muffle its teachings, bury my beliefs, or cover my convictions'—we have no hesitation in saying which side he had chosen.¹

We may live for ourselves, for our poorer and perishing selves: or we may live for God, for love, for duty, for personal integrity, and for the world-wide dominion of Jesus Christ.

We may, on the one hand, set out into life with the idea that we can do what we like. And, on the other hand, we may set out with the idea that we can do only what is in keeping with the mind of Jesus Christ. On the one hand we may dwell upon what we love to call our rights, and what is due to us by others, with all the poor triumphs and the wretched mortifications of that style of living. Or, on the other hand, we may dwell rather upon our duties, and what we owe to others, especially to all who are not so well placed as we are, and what we owe to Christ who laid down His life to save the human race from falling back for ever into darkness. Yes, there is a side of the Lord, and there is another side, and probably there is not one of us who is in any honest doubt as to which is which. 'Who is on the Lord's side?' It is still an urgent and proper challenge. It is a challenge which is always coming to us. We are always, at every turn of our life—though of course most notably on certain occasions—being called upon to choose between two courses. Usually indeed, it is not so much a choice between one course which is good and another which is frankly bad. It is rather a choice between two courses of which one is better than the other. In most cases no one knows how we have acquitted ourselves in these lonely matters of the spirit.

¹ Tolstoy.

¹ G. Campbell Morgan.

The world, outsiders, may give us credit for having chosen well, when we know that we have not chosen well, but have chosen ill, for we have chosen the course which we knew would be generally approved, against some private guidance.

But this is the very thing that keeps up the very glow of life, saving it from monotony and commonplace; this—that each day we have to meet an enemy and in every case we have the power to triumph.

Admittedly there are cases where it is still difficult to say which of two courses is the one which God would have us follow. But there is no case in which we may not be sure of our own intention. And in these matters of decision, it is the intention of our choice which God considers. We may have chosen wrongly as time proves; but we have not chosen sinfully if we chose with a pure intention. In fact, let us be on our guard against exaggerating the difficulties of a holy and faithful life. In the journey of our souls, there are always lamps by the way: and certainly there is a lamp at every parting of the ways—a lamp in some remembered Word of God, in some incident in the life of our Blessed Lord, or in some word or principle or parable of His. Or it may be that something shines upon us at the moment from the memory of our own beloved ones from what we know they would have us do. But God hath not left Himself without witness in any one of us, so that when this challenge comes to us again, ‘Who is on the Lord’s side?’ we have each one of us light enough and understanding enough to know exactly how we ought to feel.

Religion and Patriotism

Exod. xxxii. 32.—‘Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

Rom. ix. 3.—‘I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.’

1. We know under what circumstances Moses uttered this most pathetic prayer. While he was on the Mount, Israel had sinned in the matter of the Golden Calf; and in His righteous indignation God had threatened the destruction of the nation. With the generous ardour of a

noble nature, Moses lost sight of every other consideration but the danger of his people; and on their behalf he puts forward a three-fold plea: that God would have respect to His own work in delivering Israel from bondage, that He would have respect to His own honour, and not give the Egyptians occasion to blaspheme, and that He would have respect to the promises which He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was an intercession to the full as daring as Abraham’s for the cities of the Plain; but while the latter failed, this succeeded, and ‘the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.’

But when the law-giver came down from the Mount bearing the Tables of the Law, and saw the people dancing about the Golden Calf, his anger knew no bounds. He broke up the Calf, burned it, and ground it to powder; and in executing judgment upon the ringleaders of the apostasy he offered every possible human reparation for this shameful lapse into idolatry. Next day Moses returned to the Mount of Vision, now become a Mount of Intercession, and offered his sublime prayer: ‘If thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.’

2. When we study the connexion in which the passage occurs, we see that it was under the influence of highly wrought feeling, too, that St Paul said: ‘I could wish myself accursed (Anathema) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.’ He had been concluding one branch of the great argument of his greatest Epistle; and, as the security of those who were in Christ became more clear to his mind, his spirit suddenly catches fire, and he asks: ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.’ And as the troops of vanquished enemies defile before him, he bursts into this song of triumph: ‘For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ While the glow of this exalted strain is still upon him, the Apostle, with one of those rapid turns of

thought which are characteristic of him, proceeds to say, that although the language of joy is on his lips, heaviness and sorrow are in his heart—heaviness so great, and sorrow so constant, that he could wish himself Anathema from Christ for his brethren, his kindred according to the flesh, who in such slender numbers had embraced the righteousness of faith.

We are not in the region of dogmatic statement here, but of the most intense spiritual emotion. We seem to hear the heart-throbs of men in a very tumult of feeling; and all the manhood and Godhood that are in them literally quiver with devotion to the best interests of their people. It was not merely that they were willing to sacrifice their temporal life, with all its joys, and with all its prospects. Many a man has been willing to do that. But Moses and Paul went far beyond all ordinary heroism. They felt as if they could sacrifice, not their temporal life only, but even their spiritual life and all its hopes, if so be that they could save their nation, and rescue it from impending doom. ‘Blot me out of thy book’: ‘I could wish myself Anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.’

God did not rebuke the language of His servants. He recognized that in both cases it was the language of love on fire; and accordingly, disregarding the letter, He respected the spirit of the request which the one actually made, and the other—his whole soul kindled as by ‘a spark of the substitutionary love of Christ’—had it in him to propose.

¶ When John Knox cried in an agony, ‘Give me Scotland or I die!’ was he not setting his will against the Eternal? Was it not his business to live and work willingly, though it should not be God’s purpose to give him his desire? Measure the words by rule and compass and they are an offence to God. But what God Himself thought of John Knox’s prayer we may read in the way He answered it.

3. It has been said that ‘of all the forms of human heroism patriotism is probably the most unselfish’; and amongst unselfish patriots none surely occupy a more distinguished place than Moses and the Apostle Paul. From the record of his life and work, is it not literally true that Moses lived for his people? Their ingratitude, their peevishness, their stupidity, their fatal facility in stumbling into wrong-

doing on small provocation or on none—all this, and much more, he bore, and bore with un-murmuring patience. For good or for evil, he was one with Israel. He desired no life or destiny apart from that of the chosen nation. Even the favour of God was a blessing not to be desired if it could not be shared with his people. Nor was Paul a whit behind Moses in the intensity and disinterestedness of his patriotism. Though called to be the Apostle of Christian liberty, not for a moment did he allow himself to forget his obligations to his own race. His heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel was, that they might be saved. Wherever he went, his first offer of the gospel was to his countrymen. When, now, they attempted to undo his work, and, now, to defame his character, his magnanimous soul could always find excuses for them; and we surely reach the very sublimation of patriotism in the words: ‘I could wish that myself were Anathema from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.’

In explanation of a patriotism so consummate and commanding, it ought not to be forgotten that, in the case both of Moses and Paul, it had a deep religious root. Without religion, no doubt, the sentiment of patriotism may make a weak man great, and a great man greater still; but on a broad view of the history of humanity, do we not find, that the very loftiest heights are touched only by those whose patriotism is the direct outcome of their deepest religious convictions—only by such men as could say with the Psalmist: ‘Because of the House of the Lord our God I will seek thy good?’ The love of Moses and Paul for people and fatherland was a love kindled as by a fire from God’s own altar. They did what they did, they were what they were, because there burned within them that eternal flame. The service of man, the enthusiasm of humanity—these reach their grandest issues only where there is first, and ever growing in strength, the knowledge and the love of God.

¶ Of the many Christian patriots who have enriched our English history, Gladstone may serve as a type. His character and his political career were nurtured in prayer. When a young man he wrote: ‘One conclusion theoretically has been much on my mind—it is the increased importance and necessity and benefit of prayer, of the life of obedience and self-sacrifice. May

God use me as a vessel for His own purposes, of whatever character and results in relation to myself. . . . May God who loves us all still vouchsafe me a testimony of His abiding presence in the . . . hope that I might work an energetic work in this world, and that by that work . . . I might grow into the image of the Redeemer.'

The Sacrifice of the Ornaments

Exod. xxxiii. 6.—'And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from mount Horeb onward' (R.V.).

1. THE ornaments referred to in the text were of course those which had been given by the Egyptians. It had been promised the Israelites that they should not go out empty, and the promise had been royally kept. Eager to get Israel away at any cost, the Egyptians had given all that they were asked for. And so it came to pass that in the Exodus the children of Israel were no longer poor, but were possessed of a strange wealth of ornament. It was a doubtful and a dangerous enrichment. Had they been accustomed all their lives to such adornments they might have been less prone to overvalue them. But all unexpectedly and suddenly to find themselves possessors of these things, was no slight temptation to be worldly. And at last their growing pleasure in them, and all the selfishness that was begotten so, fell like a curtain between them and God.

In their journeyings they were brought to Mount Sinai which is Horeb. The test of their spirit came when Moses was detained in the Mount with God. As long as Moses was in the camp they had some substantial assurance of Jehovah's company and care. But Moses absent reduced everything to unreality. Aaron was therefore urged to make an idol! It was out of the gifts of the Egyptians that the idol was made. They carried in their wallets that which became their idol. Their possessions separated them from their God. When their estranged devotion found expression there was an idol in the camp.

2. One of the consequences of this idol worship was the threatened withdrawal of

Jehovah. There are things with which God will not keep company. Men have to make their choice between this and that! As a condition of His continued favour He asks the surrender of the things that lowered His people's ideals and compromised their affections. 'Now therefore put off thy ornaments.' It was a severe and exacting demand. But He put them on their honour to do it themselves. He might have allowed Amalek to plunder the tents of Israel, or to wage war upon them and carry away as spoil and booty the treasures that Israel had allowed to pilfer their affections. But Israel's reproachful possessions were not permitted to become the enrichment of Israel's enemies. God asks Israel to put its own house in order.

There are certain strippings off in human life that we have no power to arrest. The flight of time, for example, does such work, for time is a conqueror no less than death. There are many ornaments of mind and body that the years strip off from us resistlessly, as the leaves are stripped by the November gale. Failure or disappointment, sickness or death, may overtake us, and we cannot keep our possessions from their clutching hand. In this life of ours there are certain strippings off we cannot hinder, and a wise man will lay his reckoning with these. But in the text it is not facts like these that we are faced with. The children of Israel stripped *themselves*, we read; it was a voluntary act.

¶ It was a high and noble spirit in Rebecca, in *Ivanhoe*, that surrendered a compromising attachment saying, 'I will tear this affection from my heart though every fibre bleed as I rend it away.'

3. Horeb gave the people a new scale of values. 'I buried my materialism in the grave of my father,' said the son of an eminent man of God. That is how some of us come to Horeb. Some experience that releases us from attachment to externals, because it teaches us the inwardness of the true life, the value of the things of the spirit. It may be a cradle that holds the trust of a life, or it may be the earlier other trust of a life at the wedding altar. Horeb may be reached on some birthday, when the figure of the years touches our imagination with a new solemnity. Some joy or sorrow, some gain or loss, may open the floodgates of

the soul, and with the new discovery of God, all life undergoes revision.

¶ There is a memorable scene in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* in which Hetty Sorrel, in her room at night, decks herself out in her cheap finery. She has stolen upstairs, locked the door, and lit the bits of candle at the looking-glass. And then she lets her glorious hair fall down, throws her scarf on, and puts in her gaudy ear-rings. And so she sits gazing at herself, thoroughly happy and self-satisfied, dreaming her foolish childish little dreams. But a day was coming for Hetty when all the deeps were to be opened up; when she would be face to face with the awful realities of life and death. George Eliot tells us how, when *that* day with its vision came, Hetty stripped herself of all her ornaments.

The artist who has been to Horeb has a new atmosphere in his art, the musician a new quality in his music, the singer a new tone in his voice. The preacher who has been to Horeb has a new accent in his preaching.

¶ Using another metaphor and alluding to his own unexpected call to preach, Lacordaire said, 'It is with the orator as with Mount Horeb: before God strikes him he is but a barren rock, but as soon as the Divine hand has touched him, as it were with a finger, there burst forth streams that water the desert.'

The Reformation was the Mount Horeb of the Churches of Europe. There fell on men through the power of the Holy Ghost a new and burning sense of the Divine. And then what happened? The Church, impassioned by her vision, stripped off the ornaments that were her pride. Gone were the jewels of silver and of gold. Gone were the decked garments of the priests. Gone was the altar and the crucifix, and the savour of incense, and the sound of bells. And in its place there came a simpler worship—a worship that was as sublime as it was simple, for it spoke of access to the heart of God.

The sacrifice of the ornaments was not an impoverishment of worship or of religion, but an enrichment. The external had obscured the eternal. Horeb is for a Church or an individual the place where, in some great adventure of the soul, everything is hazarded upon the reality of God, and everything else unseated from His throne, that Christ may be all in all.

'Tis the look that melted Peter,
'Tis the face that Stephen saw.
'Tis the eye that wept with Mary,
Can alone from idols draw.
Draw and win and fill completely
Till the cup o'erflow the brim,
What have we to do with idols
Who have companied with Him?

Religion as Friendship

Exod. xxxiii. 11.—'And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.'

1. WHAT is religion? If we go to the philosophers for a definition they answer us in many ways. To one, religion has to do primarily with the mind, with correct ideas of God and His relations with man. To another its source is in the emotions, chiefly in a feeling of awe and dependence. To still another, religion is essentially a matter of the moral will, of doing the will of God. All these conceptions are true, and each vital after its kind; but they make religion a complicated, if not a cloudy thing.

Or if, again, bewildered by the philosophers, we turn to the men and women we know and ask them what religion is, each one gives a different answer. One thinks it is what we believe, much or little, what Church we belong to, what creed we recite. To another a religious man is one who reads the Bible, says his prayers, and goes to church. While to another any one is religious who pays his debts, helps the unfortunate in their affliction, and lives a clean life. All of which is true enough, but somehow it does not satisfy us. We want something simpler, less debatable, which touches alike the heart and the mind.

Does not the suggestion of the text offer us a simple, searching, satisfying definition of religion? 'God spake unto Moses face to face and as a man to his friend.' Religion is friendship with God and man. St James says that Abraham was called 'the friend of God,' surely the most perfect of all descriptions of a religious man! To be friendly with God, and to know God as a friend—that is the sum of it. Of course, one may think of God in many other ways. Some people who do not believe in God in any other way believe in Him as a

formula. Just as we cannot do without the formula of gravity to account for certain facts in the physical world, so we need the formula of God to account for certain facts in the moral and spiritual order. But one cannot be friendly with a formula. The very idea of friendship implies something more intimate, a warmth and glow of personal relationship. A man to whom God is a formula may have a philosophy, but not a religion—at least not in a vivid and satisfying sense of it.

¶ ‘To feel,’ Tennyson once said to a friend, ‘that God is by my side, just as much as you are, that is the very joy of my heart.’

2. The history of the world is made roseate through stories of friends and friendships. Friendship is one of the greatest words in human language, and friends are man's most valuable assets. The most exalted mood of man is that in which the mystic blending of heart with heart is felt; when moving about in the shadows and loneliness of existence he suddenly comes to realize that his soul has been lost and found again in the being of another. Asked the secret of his beautiful life, Charles Kingsley replied, ‘I had a friend.’

Many years ago a little girl used to play with Joseph Parker in his study in the City Temple. Parker had no children of his own, but his love of them just stopped short of idolatry. The great preacher and the little girl were close friends. If he went away he wrote her the most fantastic letters, with all sorts of amusing pictures drawn on the margin—not unlike the letters of Lewis Carroll to his child friends. The little girl grew to be a beautiful and brilliant woman, who wrote a number of stories under the pen-name of John Oliver Hobbes. In one of her stories she wrote these words: ‘Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person: having neither to weigh thoughts nor to measure words, but pour them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.’

It is a perfect description of a friend—one with whom we can think aloud, blurting out anything in our minds without restraint or fear, knowing that if true it will be treasured, and if it is foolish it will be forgotten. How could we live without those understanding

friends who love us in spite of our faults, and who believe in us even when we do not believe in ourselves? If they are easy to please they are hard to satisfy, since by their love they rebuke us and by their faith they insist that we be and do our best.

¶ ‘A friend,’ says Emerson, ‘is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real that I may drop even the undermost garments of dissimulation.’

Yet the dearest human friend can come only so near to us. There is a ‘polar privacy,’ as Emily Dickinson called it, which no mortal can enter and which no friend tries to invade. Some souls cannot get close to their fellows. Emily Brontë could not. Nature was her friend, but a strange solitude shut her away from human beings. For all her genius and charm, she was aloof and alone, even with those who loved her. Only God can enter utterly into any human soul—but, as St Francis said, ‘He is always courteous and does not come in unless we open the door.’

¶ In my life I have been so much alone, it cannot be helped. Where is the comrade? I never had one. The absolute self is far within, and no one can reach it. God reaches it, and He only.¹

It is this truth that makes prayer, if we know how to use it, simple, natural, and real—the talk of a man with his Friend. The disciples once found Jesus praying, and what they saw made them beg Him to teach them how to pray, and He said: ‘A certain man had a Friend. . . .’ A certain man, any man, the ordinary man, the least of men—‘A certain man had—a Friend.’ He lived and died in perfect communion with God the Friend.

3. It is in the life of Jesus that we are shown, as nowhere else, the neighbourliness and friendliness of God. By the wealth of His love, by His incredible approachableness, by His fine art of kindness, by His heroic moral loveliness, by all that He was that no words can tell, Jesus made God real and near. If we are to make humanity Christian, we must first make Christianity human, as Jesus did. It is difficult to think of God to-day, but we can think of what Jesus was and is, and through Him find that God is indeed our best Friend to whom we

¹ T. E. Brown.

can commit our souls here, hereafter, and for ever.

Art thou not mine, O Lord ?
I do not think that I shall find a friend
More tender than the One that I have found ;
If He stay by me, I desire no more.¹

'I have called you friends,' said Jesus. Aye, but it is an exalted and exacting word, making high demands of us. To be a Christian is to be a friend of Jesus, not merely to have Him as our friend. All of us want Jesus for our friend, but are we willing to be His friend ? One who shares His sorrow, to whom He shows His wounds and whispers His desperate purpose, asking our utmost love and loyalty ? It is the greatest adventure known among men, requiring all that a man has of faith and fortitude—yet that is what He asks, nothing else, nothing less !

And if we want to know what religion is every day, friendship tells it all. To be friendly, not simply with our friends who are friendly with us, but with all kinds of people, in the varied contacts of life—that is the root and fruit of the matter. That is what Jesus did. For three swift and gentle years He went about doing good—just being friendly, cheering the depressed, healing the sick, encouraging the lonely. One wonders why we do not do more of it. How much the world needs it. It is so easy to do, and it acts so instantaneously. It is so unfailingly remembered and returned—if not to us then to others who need it more.

¶ When Richard Lewis Nettlehip, the English philosopher, died from the effects of exposure on Mont Blanc, his guide told the story afterwards that, being unable to speak, Nettlehip had shaken hands again and again with the guide to show that he did not attribute the disaster to his negligence. 'How characteristic of Nettlehip !' said a friend on hearing this incident. 'I was walking with him once when he had occasion to stop and speak to a poor man. On leaving him, he shook him warmly by the hand, and I remarked on this. Nettlehip answered, "I shake hands with everybody."'

4. In a world where we see 'the altogether-ness of everything,' only a great religion of

¹ Mrs. Hamilton King, *The Disciples*.

friendship can save us from chaos. Not religion as a huddle of sects, divided about unrealities and little realities. Such a religion is obsolete, impotent—it does not signify, and the incoming generation has repudiated it. No, what we need is religion as a creative power, giving unity and coherence to life, and lifting us to a new level of being. By the same fact, a religion of friendship must begin with a new friendship of religions, if our sect-ridden world is to be set free for a new dimension of fellowship. To put it plainly, if religion cannot save us from the hell of war and the savagery of our social order on earth, it cannot save us anywhere else ; and it will be given up.

But religion will not be given up, because it is 'the life of God in the soul of man'—a life of faith, love, sacrifice, service, joy. It means that the Church is a focus of faith, a sanctuary of fellowship, a society of 'the friends of God,' as Tauler called his band of mystics ; its task to make men friends of God and one another, to lift races and classes out of solitariness and selfishness into solidarity and fraternity. It means that each of us must be a friend of God, dedicated to His will, devoted to His Holy and high purpose for the good of man and the fulfilment of his life in fellowship.

Only so can our little lives find worth and meaning and be saved from futility. There comes a time when we must make friends with God, or we shall have no friend at all, not even ourselves. All of us come into this strange adventure of life through one mysterious gateway of birth. In the lashing of the storm we must all cling to one Almighty Hand. In the wreck of evil we must all fly to one Eternal Pity. At last we pass out through the same Valley of Shadow into the dark—let us love one another as Jesus loved us and love God with His love.

O friend, my bosom said,
Through thee alone the sky is arched,
Through thee the rose is red ;

Me too thy nobleness has taught
To master my despair ;
The fountains of my hidden life
Are through thy friendship fair.

Sons of the Tabernacle

Exod. xxxiii. 11.—'Moses . . . turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.'

1. THERE is something very beautiful and significant about the relations which existed between Joshua and Moses. It is the contact of maturity with youth, of the master with the scholar; and it suggests to us that deep, natural order which insures that the young should evermore step into the places of the aged and carry on the progress of the world. Ibsen, in one of his memorable plays, *The Master Builder*, represents the master builder as oppressed by a strange fear. He hears the young knocking at the door, and he fears that the young will enter in and dispossess him. Such a fear as this is impossible to the wise and magnanimous man. He has learned long ago the truth that the necessary man does not exist, and that all the work we do is incomplete in itself; it is but an instalment in the plan of universal progress. Such a man does what Moses did. He attaches young men to him and teaches them his methods and cheerfully anticipates the hour when they will take up the work which falls unfinished from his hands. And the youth who is magnanimous and noble hearted will rejoice to be the humble pupil of the man who is fit to instruct him. He will learn to serve, that hereafter he may be fit to rule. That is the altogether beautiful and noble relation between Moses and Joshua. As Moses passed with shining face into the camp and the people watched with awe the splendid and majestic figure, Joshua, a young man, remains behind in the Tabernacle of his God, there seeking for the grace and purification that shall fit him to take up the work which Moses has relinquished.

But the scene has a deeper significance. It is not merely the dramatic association of old and young that interests us—what we need to see is that the bond which is common to them is the great bond of a religious ideal. Moses is fresh from the vision of God; Joshua is seeking it. He, more than any other man in that camp, responded to the spiritual passion of Moses. Religion for him, as for Moses, was the greatest thing in the world and the only enduring thing.

Let us try to see what the Tabernacle did for Joshua; and through the lessons of this ancient story let us try to grasp what is the true function of the Church in our modern life.

2. Now, as we read the story of Joshua, and try to estimate his character, we find three notes in it: there is the spirit of devoutness, the spirit of restraint, and the spirit of heroism; and the root of each is religion. These were the fruits of the Tabernacle, and they were worthy fruits; and we claim, therefore, for the Church of Jesus Christ that it does directly minister to the spirit of devoutness, the spirit of restraint, and the spirit of heroism.

(1) First, let us consider *the spirit of devoutness* and what it means. Joshua is a young man, and he departs not out of the Tabernacle. Does not that mean that he was sedulous to keep the freshness of his young devoutness? For is it not true that we all begin life with a certain aptitude for reverence and goodness? In the child's mind the very wonder of the world works the spirit of reverence. To the child prayer, God, and heaven are natural conceptions. Thus Wordsworth speaks of the child having in his heart 'the murmur of the sea that brought him hither,' of standing in the fresh light 'that never was on land or sea,' a light which all too early fades into 'the light of common day.' And what is it that most quickly and fatally destroys this first, fine, fresh devoutness of the mind? Is it not the cynicism of the age?—the light, bitter talk which cheapens all good and gracious acts, the imputation of dishonest motives to honest men, the scorn of that which is serious, and the ridicule of that which is high, until presently the bloom is rubbed away from life, and a youth knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, and least of all the value of the most valuable things in the world, such as innocence and the simple mind, and the incorrupt heart.

¶¶ Tolstoy tells us that when he was a youth about eighteen, he met in Paris, after a long absence, an older brother. They occupied the same room. Going to bed, the elder brother got in first. Tolstoy, as was his wont, knelt at the bedside and prayed. As he rose from his knees, he saw his brother looking steadily at him. 'You still do that?' said he. He said no more; but it was enough. Tolstoy tells us

that he did not say his prayers again for something like twenty years!¹

Joshua, strong man as he was, knew where the strength of his life lay. It was in the temper of devoutness. He knew that he must grow a soul before he could live a great life and achieve a great career, and hence he 'went not out of the tabernacle.' He found the soil, the temperature, the atmosphere for soul-growth there. He had a great work to do as a builder of a nation, and knew the truth, which Mrs Browning once expressed in pregnant phrase :

It takes a soul

To move a body : it takes a high-souled man
To move the masses, even to a cleaner sty.

The great claim of the Church upon the world is that it has grown souls in men, and that these are the men who have done the most to uplift humanity.

(2) Then there is the second note : *the spirit of restraint*. Man needs something he can fear ; something he can obey ; something higher than his own will ; and where is he to find this restraint ? It is found in the tremendous conception of man's personal responsibility to God ; and the Church exists to enforce that conception. Joshua knew that he needed some force of restraint upon his life, and we need it too. Where can we find that spirit of restraint so well as in those solemnities of reiterated worship which confirms us in allegiance to our Maker by constantly making the sense of God supreme in our thoughts, our consciences, and our lives ? Men need the spirit of restraint. They have always needed it, and hence you will find that the oldest thing in human life is religion—the bond that holds man to his unseen Creator and Judge. Joshua saw that if he was to escape the spirit of license which was the ruin of his people he must learn to live as ever in his great Taskmaster's eye. That was why he was in the Tabernacle.

¶ Anatole France tells of a young French writer, who won the admiration of the Parisian world by the steady growth of his power in book and play. He was lionized by the élite of Paris, and the drawing-rooms of the great houses of fashion were thrown open to him. But the young man went on his way undisturbed. His books did not suffer, but deepened in power

¹ J. A. Hutton.

and grew in beauty and strength. 'You keep your head, young Daniel, or shall I say, young Joseph,' said France to him one day. 'Sir,' said the young man, 'before I knew the drawing-rooms of Paris I dwelt in the Louvre and the great cathedrals.'¹

(3) And then we see that religion was for Joshua *an impulse to heroism*, and this truth lifts the whole matter into a national question. In spite of all that may be said, and much that may be said justly, about the imperfections of religious men, we affirm that, taking man for man, you will find a higher type of character in the Church of Christ than anywhere else. Carlyle thought so—and he was not a soft-hearted or lenient critic—when at the end of his life he said that the best of the religious people he had known were the best people he had known anywhere, and that is the justification of the Church. It is not in vain that Joshua goes into the Tabernacle. It is not rant and cant that is found there ; it is those serious thoughts which give weight to character and those profound truths which impose restraint on conduct, and finally, those Divine principles which produce heroism and equip men for the highest service of their race.

¶ Earlier in the present war a well-known writer sneered at what he called our 'praying Generals.' The gibe was called forth by a declaration of Lord Gort's, proclaiming his belief in the efficacy of prayer. Since that time other eminent British soldiers have made known their own faith in the reality and power of prayer and their allegiance to Him whose throne is ever open to the cry of those who trust in Him. General Dobbie, the hero of Malta, has, by means of the wireless and his public speeches, declared that it was prayer which saved the George Cross island. General Montgomery, the austere soldier so reminiscent of Cromwell, whose victories have thrilled the world, is known to be a man of prayer and to have told his troops they would find the greatest source of strength in the daily reading of the Word of God. Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, now India's Viceroy, is another of our country's notable soldiers whose loyalty to the Living God is equally widely known.²

¹ R. Menzies, *The Magnet of the Heart*, 144.

² Graham W. Hughes.

The Divine Companionship

Exod. xxxiii. 14.—'My presence shall go with thee.'

1. IN a sense all great men are lonely men. The great ruler, statesman, leader, all tread a solitary path, all alike have burdens which no other may or can share. Moses knew loneliness. Explaining the loneliness felt by Cromwell, Emerson says: 'To be great is to be misunderstood.' Luther knew this also. In one of his letters he cries: 'O Thou, my God! Do Thou, my God, stand by me! Oh, do it! Thou must do it. Yea, Thou alone must do it. Not mine, but Thine is the cause. For my own self, I have nothing to do with these great and earthly lords. I would prefer to have peaceful days and to be out of the turmoil. But Thine, O Lord, is the cause. It is righteous and eternal, stand by me, Thou true, eternal God!'

¶ One night during a crisis of the Civil War in America a stranger came to Henry Ward Beecher's house. It was night and Mrs Beecher went to see who it could be. She found a stranger muffled to the eyes, who asked to see the great preacher. He refused to give his name and, because her husband's life was threatened at the time, Mrs Beecher declined to receive him. She returned upstairs and told her husband of the stranger at the door. Beecher at once came down, and a few minutes later Mrs Beecher heard her husband admit him, then she heard her husband's voice raised in earnest prayer. Later, when Mr Beecher rejoined her, he told her that the muffled stranger was none other than Abraham Lincoln.

2. We lesser folk can know but little of the loneliness of the great, but in some degree this thing is true of every man. Each one travels on a solitary way. 'What man knoweth the thoughts of a man?'—his hopes and fears and aspirations?

We are spirits clad in veils,
Man by man was never seen,
All our close communion fails
To remove the shadowy screen.

Many of our experiences are unique, unanticipated, incommunicable. 'All alone we live' and 'all alone we die.' God's presence means companionship, and in that companionship is comfort and strength.

Let us think of some of the lonely experiences of life which will be cheered by this wonderful companionship.

(1) There is *the loneliness of sorrow*. Is there anything more solitary than sorrow that can find no friendly ear? Sorrow which has an audience can frequently find relief in telling and re-telling its own story. There is a psalmist who, speaking out of some desolating experience, says of it: 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old.' Aye, there is nothing ages people like the loneliness of unshared grief. And there are multitudes of people who know of no friendly human ear into which they can pour the story of their griefs. The outlet manward is denied them. What then? Is the desolation hopeless? No. 'My presence shall go with thee.' The story can be whispered into the ear of the Highest. The Companionship is from above.

¶ 'It is a great blessing,' said Heine in his later Confessions, 'to know that there is some one in heaven to whom I can complain. It is a wonderful relief to whine the whole list of my sufferings, especially after midnight, when Mathilde is taking the rest she needs so badly. Thank God that I am not alone in such hours, that I can whimper as much as I like without being ashamed.'

(2) There is *the loneliness of success*. Lonely success can be as desolate as unshared sorrow. There are some hearts who have no earthly friend with whom they can share the joy of their achievements. This experience is more common than we think. Honours were showered upon Thomas Carlyle in his old age—honours that he would gladly have received in earlier days. But it all came too late. The light of his life had gone out. His wife was in the grave. Out of the loneliness of success he exclaimed: 'Had it been earlier, it had been kind.'

¶ Eric Lewis, the actor, made an enormous hit in Sutro's play, *Mollentrave on Women*, and was enthusiastically called before the curtain several times on the first night. He told Sutro that it was the only time he had ever had a call to himself, and when he returned to his rooms after the performance he had no one to tell his success to. So he took his father's photograph off the mantelpiece and told it to him.¹

It is not otherwise with the moral triumphs

¹ David Williamson.

of the soul. When we sin we need a companion to whom we can tell the story of our defeat; but when we have some secret victory we want a companion to share the glow and glory of the conquest, or the glow and glory will fade. Even when we conquer secret sin the heart calls for a Companion in the joy. And here He is! 'My presence shall go with thee.' If you turn to the psalmists you will find how continually the ringing pæans sound from hearts that are just bursting with the desire to share their joy and triumph with the Lord. They are the communings of victory, the glad fellowship of radiant souls and their God.

(3) There is *the loneliness of temptation*. In this serious business of temptation it is little that friend can do for friend. The great battle is waged behind a closed door, is desperate and lonely work. But we need not be alone! One Presence can pass the door that leads to the secret place. 'My presence shall go with thee,' not as an interested, sympathetic spectator but as a Fellow-fighter, Redeemer, and Friend.

(4) There is *the loneliness of suffering*. Several years ago a Chinese woman brought a slave to a Christian hospital in Canton. This girl was blind, as the social outcasts of China often are, but she was also going lame, and so might become useless to her owner. The doctors said that amputation of one leg was necessary. Whereupon the owner decamped, abandoning her human property. The girl worked about the place, but at length had a new sorrow added to her already heavy load by the discovery of signs of leprosy upon her. Blind, lame, diseased, she departed to be isolated in a colony of similar unfortunates. Yet she departed not as she came. For while in the hospital she had learned to know and love Christ. And in the leper colony she told the others of the great love that had come to her. In two years she had a group of leper Christians about her. In five years she had a leper church. She, too, as she went out to that leper colony, might have heard His voice saying: 'My presence shall go with thee.'

(5) And there is *the loneliness of death*. It is pathetic, deeply pathetic, how we have to stand idly by at the last moment—doctor, nurse, husband, wife, child—all to stand idly by, when the lonely voyager launches forth into the unknown sea! It is the loneliness of death that is so terrible. If we and those whom we

love passed over simultaneously, we should think no more of it than changing our homes from one place to another. But every voyager goes alone! Alone? Nay, there is a Fellow-voyager! 'My presence shall go with thee.' The last, chill loneliness is warmed by the Resurrection Life. There is a light in the valley, as of the dawning of grander days. 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.' 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.'

¶ Human companionship counts for very much in life, but I think there is no doubt that the sharpest corners must always be turned alone. So it is now; so it will be when the great change comes, and we must e'en let go the warm fingers that cling to ours. Like children stumbling in the dark, we stretch out our hands into the unknown, but not in vain, no, not in vain.¹

Hold Thou my hands!
In grief and joy, in hope and fear,
Lord, let me feel that Thou art near:
Hold Thou my hands!

And when at length,
With darkened eyes and fingers cold,
I seek some last loved hand to hold,
Hold Thou my hands!

Journey and Rest

Exod. xxxiii. 14.—'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'

It comforts us, lesser men and women, to discover that even Moses had his tremors. But how well he understood the cure for them! He carried them immediately to God. Those labours that transcended his skill, those disappointments that saddened his spirit, those uncertainties that hung over his head like baffling clouds—he spread them before his Lord. And, talking with Him, he was again Moses of the shining face and the untroubled heart. For God would say to him: 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.'

The promise is old and new; lofty and near;

¹ F. F. Montresor.

universal and particular. Innumerable multitudes have leaned on it, and it has not failed under their weight. But we must learn to comprehend its preciousness one by one. It is not for the crowd; it is for the separate heart, and for the single and solitary life.

1. God's assurance carries a hint of two inescapable elements, two deeply inwoven features, of our human nature.

The compulsion to journey is one. We are impelled on and ever on. We cannot remain stationary, any more than the Israelites and their leader could linger in the hot and waterless deserts. Circumstances are our goads and drivers, hurrying us from childhood to youth and manhood to age, from health to sickness, from gladness to grief, or, contrariwise, from winter and its gloom to summer with its warmth. And, besides circumstances, there is that within ourselves which will not let us continue in one stay—the coveting to have more, which is a poor motive; or the passion to know more, which is a worthier quest; or the longing to be more, which is better still. Is there any one absolutely satisfied?

¶ Albert Smith, describing his ascent of Mont Blanc in 1851, says: 'As a splendid panorama, the sight from the Rigi Kulm is more attractive. The chequered fields, the little steamer plying from Lucerne to Fluelen, the tiny omnibuses on the lake-side road to Arth, the desolation of Goldau, and the section of the fatal Rossberg are all subjects of interest and much admiration. But the Rigi is 6000 feet above the sea level, and Mont Blanc is over 15,000 feet.'

But, in closest alliance with this compulsion, is the other characteristic—the hunger for rest. A craving for home haunted the pilgrims across the tiresome and peril-haunted wilderness—home with its security, its fixedness, and its quiet. So it is with us.

¶ An Irish poet describes an old woman of the roads, who is tired of her vagrant life, heartsick of tramping through wind and rain, and who prays to God for a little house of her own, where she could find peace in homely duties during the day, and then, she says:

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed, and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delf!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor
bush,
And tired I am of bog and road
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

2. Now, God's assurance shows us how the twin elements in our nature are reconciled.

He told Moses, long ago, of the satisfaction for both of the soul's needs; and the ancient word is yet truer for us, to whom Jehovah and Jesus are One and the Same. 'My presence shall go with thee,' God said then and says still, 'and I will give thee rest.' Thus, at once, we have the guarantee of a limitless progress and of a perfect peace.

Let us consider what happens when we are led first into His friendship. *My presence*—that signifies, in the hour when 'the great transaction's done,' the Sin-bearer, the Good Physician, the Lord who sees no iniquity in those for whom Christ died; and this Presence, recognized, welcomed, is the fountain of profoundest rest. We wanted to have, and His treasure makes us rich beyond the dreams of avarice. We wanted to know, and His wisdom leads us into marvellous light. We wanted to be, and His grace cures our hopeless evil and lifts us into new life. The weary journey of our seeking hearts has ended. But as surely another journey has begun. For who that has been brought to God in Jesus Christ does not feel himself on the verge and brink of unspeakable possibilities? He cannot fold his hands and go to sleep. The mightiest transports move him, thrill him, urge him forward.

Yes, and let us consider what happens as the friendship is confirmed and increased. God's presence goes with us step after step and mile after mile; and our journey prospers, and our rest gains in its completeness. We may put it in this way: The more progress, the more peace. The longer we study God, and the nearer we press to Him in ardency of desire and meditation and prayer, we are not fatigued, we are exhilarated; the air is fresher and the prospect finer, and our soul walks and does not faint. Or we may turn the phrase round, and say: The more peace, the more progress. The simpler is our reliance on Christ and on the God whom Christ discloses, the more unquestioning our reception of Him to be our Wisdom for righteousness and for sanctification and for redemption,

the farther we are certain to travel in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom, in the beauty of holiness, and in the fulfilment of the Father's will. Thus it comes about that the journey intensifies the rest, and the rest helps and promotes the journey. The two act and react on each other; and both of them are very good.

¶ One of St Brendan's answers to King Brude, when asked what he would find if he became Christ's man, has lived for twelve centuries in Celtic legend. 'If you become His man,' said the saint to the King, 'you will stumble on wonder upon wonder and every wonder true.'¹

3. Furthermore, God's assurance prophesies a goal in which both features of our nature will have their highest manifestation.

We seek a city which we cannot fail to reach, since we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Its rest is more triumphant than that of the saintliest now and here. But is the journeying finished then, and over for ever? Will the compulsion be unfelt any longer—the compulsion to forget things behind and to reach forth to things before? We cannot think so. 'The Lamb shall feed them'—there is the rest which is supreme. But 'the Lamb shall lead them to living fountains of waters'—there is the progress under the teaching and guiding Presence which goes on still. The thinker of the *Colloquia Peripatetica* did not care for Lessing's famous saying: 'If the Almighty, holding in His right hand "Truth" and in His left "the search after Truth," deigned to offer me the one I should prefer, I would, with all humility but without hesitation, request "the search after Truth."' No, John Duncan protested, that is the maxim of revolt. That is the pride in the unimpeded exercise of human faculty.

It may be that Lessing was only preferring an intelligent discovery of truth to a blind reception of it; yet there is force in the protest of the Scottish scholar and saint. But in the future Christ will make over to us both the right-hand and the left-hand gifts, both the Truth and the search after Truth which is ampler and vaster. One sight of Him, when He receives us to Himself, will expand and hallow and enrich our souls inconceivably; and then to live with Him in the house not made with hands will be an unending education and a perennial growth.

Alistair MacLean.

There will be the eternal journey; and, joined with it, there will be the eternal rest.

¶ Stagnation is as incompatible with the life that is lived in the heavenly city as it is with true life here. To represent heaven as a place merely of rest is to present it as a place where men would be less truly men than before. Peace and fellowship with God do not exclude activity; rather must they stimulate it.

I count that heaven itself
Is only work to surer issues.

The two verses in the Book of Revelation about this matter, which look at first sight to be opposed to each other, are like the two sides of a sphere, which unite and make the perfect whole. 'They rest from their labours.' 'They rest *not*, day nor night.'

Crisis and Opportunity

Exod. xxxiii. 15.—'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'

1. WHEN Moses spoke these words he had already had considerable experience of the great task for which God had been preparing him since he was born. We miss much of the significance of the history of Moses, yes, and of the history of all God's servants, if we fail to see and to acknowledge the wonderful way in which God prepares His instruments for the work which He intends them to do. The conviction that we are creatures gifted with free will, Divinely dowered with the power to make or to mar our own eternal destinies, is balanced by and strangely interwoven with another as deep—the conviction that all that happens to us is God's Will and of His providing. Every thoughtful man, alive to the interests of the spiritual life and not indifferent to the development of his own soul, must have experienced at times—at any rate if he is past early middle age—the feeling that all is ordered for him by God's Providence, and all the changes and chances of this mortal life are overruled by Him for good and for the furtherance of His own inscrutable purposes. This feeling, this deep conviction witnesses to a vital truth—namely, that the woof of our free will is woven into the warp of God's predestination. He chooses our

parents for us, orders our circumstances, and moulds us with the pressure of His fingers in joy or pain. We can see it clearly in the life of a great outstanding prophet and servant of God such as Moses. But it is not less true of ourselves. And if we pray for and cultivate the seeing eye, which can discern God's ways, and the hearing ear, which can hearken to and receive His counsels, we shall know it and recognize it.

Surely that day, when he realized how in the past God had been with him, and led him, and helped him, and when he prayed that, if that guiding and sustaining Presence was now to be withdrawn God would not carry him and the people of the tribes of Israel up from thence, Moses realized how wonderfully God had shaped him, a weapon to His hand meet for the work He meant him to perform. He must have seen then how the faith of his parents, and the sore persecution of the Israelites, and the casting out of the infant boy in the ark of bulrushes, and the impulsive kindness of Pharaoh's daughter, had all been used by God to gain for him that forty years' training at the Court in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, without which he would have been no fit leader and law-giver for the hosts of the Lord. And he must have recognized, too, how the rash, impetuous temper, leading to the sin of the murder of the Egyptian task-master, had been used and overruled by God to win for him those years of silence and meditation and prayer in the desert, without which no amount of merely human wisdom and learning would have availed for his great task. And now, looking back on the wonders of God's dealings in Egypt, and in the Exodus, and the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, he looks ahead and says in heartfelt prayer, 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' For he sees how all that has been done is God's doing and of God's planning.

But he must have recognized another thing too—namely, how man can resist and hinder God's plans. If, on the one hand, it is true—as it certainly is—that what God wills does most certainly come to pass, yet on the other hand it is also true that man can and does thwart God's gracious purposes, hindering them for a time and, as far as he himself is concerned, defeating them entirely. For there are two complementary truths which men need to learn. The first is that when God has decided on anything that thing will most certainly come to pass

—if not by one means, then by another; if not by one instrument, then by another more worthy one forged by God to do the work of the one that has failed. And the second truth is that for any and for every man and nation there is always the danger of failing to do the work for which they were designed by God. God will raise Himself up another man, or another nation, to do His Will; His purpose will be fulfilled. But for the failing man, the failing nation, the loss is complete and total. Something of this must have been in the mind of Moses as he looked forward to the task of leading the tribes of the Lord into their promised heritage. He would know that, of a certainty, God's Will would be done; but would he himself, would the stiff-necked and rebellious Jews who had already shown themselves so blind to God's power and mercies—would he and they be the instruments of God's purposes? Or would he and they perish, and enlargement and deliverance arise from another quarter? And in answer to such questionings, such searchings of heart, Moses can but fall back on his one sure ground of faith—the sense, namely, of God's Presence and protection. 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.'

And we know that Moses' fears were well-grounded. Of all that host two only lived to cross Jordan, to see the good land that lay beyond it, and the goodly mountain, and Lebanon, and of those two Moses was not one. The multitude, for their unbelief and hardness of heart, died by the way, and even Moses himself, the servant and friend of God, forfeited by one act of unfaithfulness the fullness of his reward, and never inherited the fair land which he had toiled for so long, and which he saw with his eyes from the top of Pisgah, but which his foot never trod. God's purposes were indeed fulfilled, but those who were first called to be His instruments could not enter into the promises because of unbelief.

2. Is it not just here that we may find God's message to us as we look forward to the New Year that lies before us? We are well aware that the coming year, and the next few years, will be a time of crisis for our nation, and the world at large. For good or for evil the next decade is charged with issues of unknown, uncalculable import. He would be a bold man who would confidently predict the spiritual results

of the conflict around us. But the Christian must believe that God is at work in the midst of all this seeming catastrophe, and that the present time is fraught with a kind of destiny for man that neither the aggressor nations nor the Devil who inspired them could have anticipated.

¶ Miss Dorothy Thompson, in one of her earlier Broadcasts, made the point that the war had brought a new birth of freedom and courage to Britain. Prior to the present crisis Britain, she declared, was suffering from 'smugness and apathy'; morally she seemed on the downgrade as a nation. But 'that Britain,' she said, 'fell with France. Broken and impotent, defeated on land, shorn of her arms, pressed back in retreat to her island, that Britain collapsed. But out of the very soul of England, out of wounds and sore defeat and vanquishment and despair, there rose, overnight, in the twinkling of an eye, another Britain—a very old Britain, and a very new Britain—the Britain of the people themselves, with all that they remembered of greatness and all they said of present reality.'

There are, of course, those to whom the idea that God interferes in the affairs of mankind, directing, modifying, over-ruling, appears mere superstition. To such, God, if there be a God at all, is remote from the world He has created, and must not be regarded as a factor operative in the daily affairs of men and nations. Such a conception of God and His work we reject altogether. The more closely we study the life history of nations, whether in past history or in current politics, the more clearly we see God's hand at work bringing down the wicked, and exalting the righteous nation. The more closely we study the life history of individual men and women, whether in sacred or secular literature, or in daily life, the more we recognize God vindicating His holiness and establishing Himself as ruler of the destinies of men.

¶ In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë describes how stricken and demoralized our people became during the titanic struggle with Napoleon. 'War was then at its height. England, if not weary, was worn with long resistance: yes, and half her people were weary too, and cried out for peace on any terms. . . . At this crisis, certain inventions in machinery were introduced into the staple manufactures of the north, which, greatly reducing the number of hands necessary

to be employed, threw thousands out of work, and left them without legitimate means of sustaining life. A bad harvest supervened. Distress reached its climax. Endurance, over-goaded, stretched the hand of fraternity to sedition.' But the nation, bleeding and starving as it was, fought on and won through at last, because it was fulfilling the Divine purpose to break an evil tyranny, and the Divine purpose is never defeated but moves to triumph. The hand of God in history is the Divine grasp of things which preserves and rescues spiritual values. The sanctities and decencies which are God-instilled will be God-fulfilled. To-day our country is in arms to deliver the world from a profane and perjured barbarism, and Mr. Churchill said truly, 'If the British Commonwealth of Nations should live for a thousand years, this will be accounted its finest hour.' God did not make the war, but God overrules the war and uses us to reveal His will.¹

What, then, is the condition of success, of true success as God judges it? It is that God should go with us in all our walks and ways during the coming year. And this, which is the condition of success for each individual, is also the condition of success for the nation, for the nation is in religious matters as its members are. Are we alive to the responsibility which rests on us for the work that God desires to have done? Are we convinced that unless His Presence goes with us and with our nation nothing but failure awaits us in the years that are before us? Are we striving by every means in our power—by prayer, by self-discipline, by daily renewed surrender of the will to God, and by humble and faithful use of all means of grace—to make ourselves more efficient instruments in His hand? If so, then others will assuredly catch fire at our enthusiasm. But if we are careless and self-confident in our attitude towards life and its responsibilities—if we are without a sense of God and of our dependence on His ever-present mercy and goodness—how can we face the future with confidence or with hope? And as the individuals are so is the nation. The greatest need of our land to-day is more religious, consecrated men and women. The true patriot is he who, realizing the duty to which God is calling him and his nation, says from his very heart, 'If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.'

¹ A. A. Cowan, *Crisis on the Frontier*, 161.

Goodness and Power

Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19.—‘And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee.’

1 Kings xix. 11.—‘And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by.’

1. WE read in the Old Testament that the two greatest spiritual leaders of the chosen people, Moses and Elijah, were privileged to behold, each on one occasion, as much of the immediate presence of God as mortal eyes can ever bear to see. The two narratives closely resemble each other. The great law-giver, not content with the promise, ‘My presence shall go with thee,’ asks for a vision of God’s glory. The answer is that no man can see the face of God and live, but that God will cause His goodness to pass before him. And then, while Moses stands in a cleft of the rock, with his face hidden, there sounds in his ears the voice of the Eternal, proclaiming His own nature: ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.’ Elijah also, when his courage has failed him, is bidden to stand on a rocky mountain side; ‘and the Lord passed by; and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.’

In both cases the revelation is made in words spoken to the heart and mind, not in visions seen by the eyes; and in both the revelation is not of God’s glory and power, but of His goodness. It was an accepted belief among the Jews that no one could see the face of God without forfeiting, at that same instant, his life as a man. There was in this belief something of the same shrinking before the deepest mysteries of things, which led the Egyptians to represent their goddess, Isis, with a veil. The unveiled face of the goddess of Nature might be inconceivably lovely or appallingly frightful; in either case, the sight of her face would destroy the rash eyes that beheld it. But in the Old Testament narratives there is a deeper meaning

than this. They teach us that the goodness of God is a higher and fuller revelation of His nature than His power and glory; and that the heart of man is a worthier throne for His presence than the fierce and terrible forces of convulsed Nature. God reveals Himself to us as goodness more than as power.

2. The conception of God which most commends itself to average human nature is that of a Divine Governor. An absolute Sovereign is one whose word is law; who can reward and punish without consulting any one or giving any reasons. The essence of despotism is irresponsibility; the good despot is one who interferes with the operation of the law whenever equity requires it. And this is what most people would like to see God doing.

But, natural as it is, this sort of religion belongs to the childhood of the human race. Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God the Father. He came to teach us, in His own Person, what are the most essential attributes of God’s character. And what are they? Remember that contrast between the ‘kings of the Gentiles,’ who exercise lordship, and the ‘great ones’ among the Christians, who are to be the servants of all; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many. Or take that most impressive opening of the thirteenth chapter of St John, describing how Jesus, knowing that the Father had put all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and was going to God—did what? Took a towel and girded Himself, and washed the disciples’ feet. The Christian measure of greatness is not power, but sympathy; not authority, but service; not violence, but patience. The supreme revelation is the self-sacrifice of God, the mystery of the Cross.

What was and is the offence of the Cross, if not just this? Evil is to be overcome by goodness, not by resistance. The twelve legions of angels are not summoned to scatter Christ’s enemies. It is said that when Clovis, the warlike Frankish king, first heard the story of the Crucifixion, he exclaimed in generous heat, ‘If I and my Franks had been there, we would have rescued Him.’ But Christ would not rescue Himself. He had faced and overcome that temptation, it would seem, at the beginning of His ministry. The third temptation of the

Devil, 'All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me,' can hardly have any other meaning. 'Use force to establish the Kingdom of God, and receive a crown instead of a cross. Fight your enemies with their own weapons; show your superior strength; trample them under your feet, and reign over them.' Once for all the temptation was rejected. 'My kingdom,' as He said before Pilate, 'is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight; but now is my kingdom not from hence.'

¶ There is a striking sentence in the Epistle to Diognetus, an early Christian document of the second century. It runs simply, 'Force is not an attribute of God.'

¶ Napoleon Bonaparte was probably, as he has been called, the greatest wielder of force in the modern world, but in his consular days he made this remark: 'Do you know what amazes me more than all else? The impotence of force to organize anything. There are only two powers in the world: the spirit and the sword. In the long run, the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.'¹

Nakedness, gibbet, and grave—
Here was a failure supreme—
How shall a dead rebel save?
How shall a felon redeem?

By love did He fight for the weak,
By love for the foul and the maimed;
Fearless, He chose to be meek;
Stainless, He dared to be shamed.

Rejecting the wisdom of force,
The panoplied legions of might,
Helpless He finished His course,
Defenceless He died for the right.

3. But, it may be asked, if God does not intervene by force, is He not only another name for natural law, which we cannot worship? Would not such a belief be just that surrender of goodness to power against which we are protesting? Would not its outcome be Stoicism, which made virtue consist in submission to natural law? Certainly this would not be a Christian conclusion. For one thing, while Stoicism agreed to the natural order, Christianity agrees *with* it. There is a difference between

¹ H. E. Fosdick.

submission and happy acceptance. But happy acceptance is only possible when we can discern behind the mechanical order another order—the order of love. We need never be afraid that natural science or anything else will rob us of the right to believe in the order of love. Recall that remarkable verse in which St Paul calmly foresees that a time will arrive when external evidences will no longer be forthcoming, and when love alone will stand unshaken. 'Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.' These external props of Christianity will not last for ever. Scaffolding is not meant to last for ever. The permanent things—the things which 'abide'—are hope, the anchor of the soul; faith, which is itself the assurance of things hoped for; and the greatest of the three, love, which, as St Paul says, is faith in action, the energy of faith.

This order of love, in which God reveals *Himself*, for love is God Himself—cannot we find it in the world? Indeed, it is our own fault if we cannot. Looking back on our own life, whether it be a short or a long one, cannot we see that we have been in the hands of a loving Father? Do we not feel that we have been taught and disciplined, rather sternly perhaps, but mercifully, so that no other training which we could have devised for ourselves could have been so good for us? We may not understand why we were born with so many defects and with such evil propensities. That is a mystery which nothing seems to make plain. But given the character which is ours, most of us must feel that we have been very tenderly and wisely dealt with. 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us' must be our verdict as we review our past lives.

And in the world outside, is there not enough of goodness and beauty to convince us that this is God's earth? Is not our real difficulty the *acceptance* of a God who is revealed in service and sacrifice? It is either selfishness or pride, or both together, which prevents us from seeing God revealed as goodness. We desire to find in God what we most desire for ourselves—power, force, control over events. If instead of that we tried to find traces of the footprints of our Crucified Lord, we should find them everywhere.

¶ Baron Von Hügel retells a story, related to him by his daughter, of what happened during a violent earthquake in the Roman Campagna. It

was a scene of terror and death, where the devastations of Nature were made more terrible by the panic of the people. Amid the wreckage, however, moved a secular priest, with two infants, one on each arm, and wheresoever he went he brought order and faith and hope into that confusion and despair.

'She told me that it made them feel that somehow Love was at the ultimate bottom of all things, a Love which was, there and then, expressing itself through the tenderness and sympathy of that lowly priest.'¹

There is, of course, no ultimate separation between God's goodness and His power. They seem to us to be separated, but they are not so in reality. As the foolishness of God is wiser than men, so the weakness of God is stronger than men. The Cross on Calvary was not the last scene of the revelation of God in Christ. But the power of goodness is of such a kind that it can only be understood by the good. It can only be seen from inside, as it were. The triumph of Jesus Christ over death was secret; it was not offered as a sign to His enemies. So for us the triumph of God's goodness, the *power* of the Resurrection, as St Paul calls it, must be lived and experienced before it can be understood. We must be content to walk by faith in this matter. Remember the brave and manly prayer with which that magnificent Ninetieth Psalm ends: 'Show thy servants thy working and their children thy glory.' It is enough for us if we can see the life-work which God has assigned us; the glory may wait, if God wills it, for those who come after. It is enough for us that God has made all His goodness pass before us—all His goodness when the figure of Jesus Christ traversed the stage of history.

Our Picture of God

Exod. xxxiii. 20.—'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'

John xiv. 9.—'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'

1. THE noblest idea that has ever entered into the human heart is the idea of God. And the most decisive factor within the soul of man and of civilization is a true and spiritual conception

¹ Frank T. Copplestone.

of God. The religion, the ideals, and, consequently, the character of a man, a nation, or an age can be understood only after one has learned in what light God has been viewed.

Our conception of God, however, is not the result of theological dialectic. Like all true knowledge, it is the result of experience—of man's gradual apprehension of the progressive revelation of the Divine. Visiting the Sorbonne in Paris, a traveller paused at the door of a lecture room. 'This,' said the guide, 'is the hall where the doctors of theology have disputed for four hundred years.' 'Indeed,' exclaimed the traveller, 'and pray, what have they settled?'

Theology is, indeed, the queen of sciences; but theology is not religion. It is no more religion than botany can be said to be flowers. Theology is but a telescopic lens which, if it be true to the best spiritual experience of the race, will assist men to see God. But if it be untrue to the best spiritual experience of the race, it will pervert men's view of God.

The idea of God, like all ideas, has had a long history. It is a far cry from the crude animism of our primitive ancestors to the Christian theism of to-day; or, to confine ourselves to the Biblical revelation, from the appearance of a God upon whose face no man can look and live, to the beneficent Being whom Jesus unveiled when He said: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Nevertheless, there is a vital thread of spiritual kinship running all the way and if men are to-day seeing the Eternal One with a more clarified vision, it is simply because they are living in the revealing sunlight of the same day which their ancestors knew only in the early twilight. For countless ages man has been painting his picture of God. And the picture upon which he has been working is ever evolving into newer, truer, and more spiritual form and beauty.

¶ A little girl was busy one day with pencil and paper. 'What are you doing?' asked her mother. 'I'm making a picture of God,' she replied. 'But,' said the shocked mother, 'you can't do that. You have never seen God. Nobody has ever seen God. Nobody knows what God is like.' The maiden was in no wise abashed. Licking her pencil, and bending over her task, she replied: 'They will know when I've finished this.' That little girl was not doing an outrageous thing, as her mother seemed

to think; she was obeying, in her own way, a universal instinct.¹

Passing by those early forms of religious experience and practice common to all primitive races and to which, in spite of their crudities, all subsequent spiritual progress is related and indebted, we may pause for a few moments in the Old Testament gallery. We ask: 'Is God great?' and the Psalmist shows us a God whose glory is revealed in the heavens and whose handiwork is written upon the firmament. We ask: 'Does God forgive the sinner after whom conscience, like quick-footed Nemesis, follows by day and by night?' And Isaiah portrays the world's Over-Soul as a forgiving Friend who pleads with men, saying: 'Come, now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

But what if, with broken heart and hopes all crushed, we must dig a deep grave? What if, when no one can understand our loss, we must see some one die in whose stead we would willingly die a thousand deaths—what then? Does God care? Can He help? And lo! Moses—the austere father of Hebrew monotheism—unveils his portrait of God. 'The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms!'

2. But after prophet and wise man had painted their best, came Jesus. The Hebrews had painted well. As a race they were the religious geniuses of ancient times. And yet, in the best of the Old Testament portrayals of God, something vital is lacking. And it could not be otherwise. It was the finite seeking to express the infinite—the human attempting to depict the Divine.

Something more was needed than simply the ability to see Providence in racial history or to depict the kind of being God ought to be. The human heart cried for a revelation that really revealed. Plato, in Athens, told his pupils that eternal truth would be understandable only when it became incarnate. And in Jerusalem every noble heart entertained the incurable desire for a Messiah who should come.

Not the formless Infinite
Can our deepest longing still,
But a Face, with meaning lit,
Purpose sure, and holy will.

¹ E. B. Storr.

And then, lo! both Greek philosophy and Hebrew faith were completely rewarded. In Bethlehem of Judaea, accompanied by the tears of a virgin and one song of angels, the Perfect Image of the Eternal was born as a little babe! The veil was drawn aside and in Jesus of Nazareth good men saw, as they will ever continue to see, the moral likeness of Him who weighs the mountains in the balance and holds the sea in the hollow of His hand.

Jesus is the world's perfect revelation of God. He was the Master Artist of the Divine. His colours were as deep and true as God Himself. 'Jesus,' says Dr Cairns, 'passed by the grand classical speech of religion, which was fast becoming a dead language, and took up the dialect of the human heart, and at this summons, and by the transfiguring power of His personality, the name of Father became pure and great enough to describe the inmost nature of the Eternal One.' Ah! Behold the Master Artist paint His portrait. God is a Father. He is a Father whose interests are bound up with the interests of His children; a Father who cares more for one human soul than for all the worlds that make their orderly pilgrimages across the awe-inspiring highways of immensity. He is a Father with a moral purpose; a Father who can, who cares, who will—and who realizes His holy plans of redemptive love through the instrumentalities of history and of Nature. He is a Father who, considering our frame and remembering that we are dust, carries a blood-red cross upon His breast and for our redemption mounts each day some new Calvary of pain and vicarious love!

Robert Browning, one of the greatest spiritual artists of the English-speaking world, describes the merciful nature of God when, in *Paracelsus*, he sings:

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.

I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy
love.

But man did not, could not, fully comprehend until, upon Calvary's central Cross he saw God's eternal heartache—the Lamb that was slain

from the foundation of the world ! ' Then, and not till then, did man lift his voice and say :

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee ;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

And more, our picture of God is not static. It is in the process of becoming still more beautiful and understandable. Its perfection is not that of Rodin's 'Thinker,' but that of a living seed. The God who spake unto men of old time is speaking still—and speaking in a more universal language. There is much concerning God that we do not know. But of this we are certain: He is a God who is Christ-like, a God who is adventurous, a God who is tremendously in earnest !

If Men saw God

Exod. xxxiii. 20.—'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'

HAVE we ever thought what would happen if men saw God ? Would anything of earth ever after seem fair, or anything less beautiful suffice ? Maybe God can only hold us to our earthly tasks by subduing the heavenly vision. He veils Himself, so that we see as through a glass darkly, lest, beholding His glory, we should be tempted to sheath every sword of mental strife, refuse the towel and basin of service, repudiate all the relationships of home and kindred and every commission of duty, lose the will to live 'and mix ourselves with Heaven and die.'

¶ Robert Buchanan has given us a poem in which he tells of a time when the face of God was seen over a cloud in the heavens, and of the petrifying effect of the awful vision.

My soul had a vision,
And in my soul's vision
The veil was lifted
And the Face was there.
This let me whisper:
It stirred not, changed not,
Though the world stood still, amazed:
But the Eyes within it,

Like the eyes of a painted picture,
Met and followed
The eyes of each that gazed.
The heart of the city
Stood silently.
How could they barter,
How could they traffic,
With the terrible Eyes to see ?
Nay, each man brooded
On the Face alone ;
And I saw the faces,
And some were glad
And some were pensive
And some were mad,
But in all places,
Hall, street, and lane,
'Twas a frozen pleasure,
A frozen pain.
The heart of the world
Had no pulsation,
'Twas a piteous Sabbath
Everywhere.

1. The Old Testament said that if a man saw God he would die. Does that mean he would refuse to live ? Yet men have desired this vision more than life. When St Thomas knelt in the silence of the church in Naples before the image of his crucified Lord, he seemed to hear a voice saying that he had written rightly, and offering the saint the choice of a reward among all the things of the world. The voice spoke from between the outstretched arms of the crucified—'Arms spread with a gesture of omnipotent generosity, the creator offering creation to His child.' When at last the saint lifted his head and spoke he said, 'I will have only Thyself.'

Through the centuries men have had experience, and they have called that experience the vision of God. It has streamed through different windows and greeted the soul in varied ways. But it has always carried its own authentic evidence. Men have recognized it, and known it to be good. They have prostrated themselves before the glory of it, and they have neither asked what was the use of it, nor what use they could make of it. They have not thought of their merits or mistakes, of what they were or what they ought to be. It has transcended all such scales. Those have been great afterthoughts. But in the presence of the vision men have known themselves to be in heaven

beholding it, in their native element though it was purgative fire—the home of all their dreams, the perfection of their being, what they were created for.¹

We may see God in a sublime act of courage, in a noble self-forgetfulness for the sake of love, in a supernatural act of forgiveness. Recall Captain Oates and his journey with Scott to the Pole—how, when food was all but gone and the conditions of life as hard as they could be, Captain Oates went out of the tent and away across the ice alone, thinking that the food would last a little longer if there were one less mouth to feed. Or take the story of Mark Sabre in *If Winter Comes*. A poor girl in her sorrow takes her life, and at the inquest, through a chain of unfortunate circumstances, Mark Sabre is deemed to be morally responsible for the girl's death. Later Sabre discovers that the dead girl has left a letter for him, and in it she thanks him for all his unfailing kindness to her and then tells him that the man responsible for her sorrow is Harold Twynning, the son of Sabre's detestable business partner. With the incriminating letter Sabre hurries off to his office, feeling that at last he can get even with his rival. He finds Twynning huddled in his office chair, and on the table beside him is the fatal telegram telling of the son's death on the battlefield. The father can only murmur: 'My boy is gone: such a good boy, and now he's gone.' And as Sabre holds the letter in his hand which would shatter that father's blest memories of his son, the words burn into his mind: 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him: for God is love.' He opens his fingers, and the crumpled paper falls from his hand into the fire and is consumed.²

Wherever and whenever we meet a true and loyal soul in whom conscience is king, and whose life, faith and hope and love crown with grace and beauty; wherever and whenever our lives are revealed to us as defective in the light of a nobler conception of duty, of a deeper peace, of a wider charity which shines from some other life; wherever and whenever we hear a word spoken, or see a deed done, which touches our lives to finer issues, and reveals to us a heaven which we have never seen before—there we see a vision of God and hear a call to the service of God.

O why are we so blind that we do not see God—in the laughter of children, in the fidelity of friends, in the dawn and the stars, in the music of the wind in the trees and the Voice that spake in Galilee and from the Cross, in the patience of loved ones and the power of virtue!

¶ When I read the Life of Jesus—especially the story of the walk to Emmaus—and feel the unutterable loveliness of His spirit of simple goodness, His heroic sincerity, His exquisite and healing pity, His impassioned yet serene fidelity to His ideal, even to death and beyond—then God is real and near, at once intimate and august. A radiant personality touches me; there is a human accent as of a friend—the light shines, and there are footsteps by my side.¹

2. If we saw God once in beauty, truth, and goodness, we could never see anything else as before. We should fast and pray and serve that we might be worthy to see Him again. We should go all our days more quietly, more humbly kind, more sure with immense certitudes. We should cease our strife and petty angers, our jealousy and envy, we should forget our childish dignities, and turn from all narrow ways of thought and feeling. It would beget in us desires for fellowship with all that was like that vision, with all that would help us to see it again.

There is only one loyalty that matters, and it is loyalty to that vision, and it overrides principles and prejudices, whether they be Roman, Anglican, or Free Church. It transcends all fussy service, all the irritating and egotistical efforts to get people to go our way. It plays havoc with social and ecclesiastical divisions; it alone makes us one in a Divine fellowship. If we would be saved we must test all we do inside and outside of Church by it.

The true culture of the soul is the creation of conditions that make the vision possible. And we obey God when we allow the thoughts and feelings engendered by that vision to guide our life, to determine our conduct, to work their beneficent change throughout our whole being until we grow like unto this adorable God, and become, though we wist not, a vision of God for others.

¹ A. E. Whitham, *The Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life*, 14.

² R. H. Turner.

¹ J. Fort Newton.

A Spiritual Standing-Place

Exod. xxxiii. 21.—'And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock.'

THIS is a record of the strange, mystic experience which came to Moses, who is called in the title of the Ninetieth Psalm, 'The man of God.' Such demonstrations of the Divine presence and power as a bush on fire and unconsumed, a sea divided, manna falling from heaven, are not vouchsafed to us. Nor is there a ledge of rock on any mountain where we may obtain a physical vision of God, save indeed as we see it in the glory of the springtime, the sublimity of the mountain, and the wonder of the sea.

What is necessary is that we should penetrate through the husk to the kernel of these stories. It is impossible for us to project ourselves into the circumstances, but the soul of the narrative we may and should grasp, for it is that which belongs to us, and to all the races and ages of men that struggle, often in very dim light, across the perplexing stage of this earthly life.

This is the one thing that stands out from this early narrative. A man may perceive God, the Author and Creator of all things; may become vividly conscious of His reality and of His nature; may hold intercourse with God as truly as with his fellow-men, may be as sure of the one as of the other. The great thing for us and for all men concerning Moses is not the burning bush, or the plagues of Egypt, or the riven rock, or the manifold miracles, but this—'The Lord spake with Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend'; and Tennyson means the same thing when he says:

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

The thing we want to know is: Is there, in the spiritual sphere, a place by God to-day where a man may stand in the soul of him as upon a solid rock, and see His glory, which is His goodness, His mercy and truth?

1. Moses could not live on the memory of the burning bush or even of the divided sea. He wanted new revelations as he wanted new manna. To-day's needs are not like yesterday's.

They are often greater and more complex. It is really not much help to me to remember that God was real and near to me in the days of my youth: it is rather a poignant regret, what the hymn calls an 'aching void,' if He is not near to me in the day of my greater need.

That is the position of this narrative. Times and circumstances had changed for Moses. The work he had undertaken was proving far more costly and exacting than he had ever dreamed. It was plain that the journey to the Promised Land was not going to be the swift and eager march of an obedient people, glad that they were liberated, and devoted to their Deliverer. It was going to be a long wandering of a rebellious people, who were going to be far more trouble to God, and far more intractable, than seas or rivers or drought. And it was plain to Moses that he could rely on nobody. Aaron and Hur had failed him, Miriam had disappointed him, and the people ransomed from Egypt had relapsed into abominable and shocking idolatry and depravity. It was then, in that dark hour and under the pressure of a heart-breaking disappointment and strain, that Moses cried out for a new and fuller revelation of God. And this satisfying answer came, 'Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock,' and the revelation of God's eternal goodness and mercy and justice followed.

It is that revelation and assurance which we want in this day of darkness and dread, of bewilderment and tragedy. It is the thing that matters most—not what *man* is, but what God is. This intolerable time will pass, like a terrible dream, but God and the soul abide. What is needed most is to be sure of Him and to be able fully to trust and rest in Him, His love and comfort and grace and goodness. It is the awful doubt of God that is apt to steal into men's souls now, like the chill mists of November, that drives the sunshine off the landscape and makes the world a valley of the shadow of death. What is wanted is a spiritual standing-place—some sure solid footing where a man may see shining through all mysteries the goodness of God, and feel that all the horror and strain of this time has no more altered His love for us than it has changed the love of a mother for her son or a wife for her husband; and where, moreover, we can see things from God's standpoint. Not something to help us to forget; not that we should feel less the things

that are transpiring around us, but that we should feel more the other realities which abide unchanged, and be able to stay ourselves upon them.

¶ I remember reading of a young woman who kept house for her mother and father over a long period of years. It so happened that she kept the tea in a tin which bore on its lid a picture of the Rock of Gibraltar. Several times each day she saw the picture of this rock. It was as familiar as anything could be.

At thirty-two years of age her circumstances changed and she found herself on board a P. and O. liner going out to Egypt. One sunny morning she wakened, looked out of the port-hole, and there was the Rock of Gibraltar just as it had been pictured on the tea tin. Here are her actual words : ' There rising up almost within the toss of a ship's biscuit was Gibraltar Rock, just as I had heard of it and seen it pictured scores of times ; but heavens ! It was *real*. I almost cried out, " Then it has been real, like that, all the time." ' ¹

2. Such a place there is, and if a man will stand there he may get in time that personal vision and consciousness which saved Moses and his work. And that place is the centre of the gospel, namely, the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord.

There are one or two things that appear quite clear to us as we stand in that place. (1) That God did not prevent evil-minded men from doing their wicked work—Judas possessed of a devil, the priests and rulers dominated by overmastering cruelty and murderous hate ; (2) We see in the Cross all their evil designs defeated, even in their success, and turned to the eternal good of mankind ; (3) We see as we stand there always this great lesson, that mankind can only be saved from its unutterable sins and its seemingly incurable follies by suffering, by agony and sorrow, and in this suffering God Himself is involved, for He bears all the shame and horror of man's sin in His own heart ; (4) We see there, moreover, the strictly limited power of death, that its dominion is broken, how life, that is in God's keeping, survives the shock and change of it, and that it cannot break the union which God creates ; (5) we see, lastly, through all the sorrow and tragedy of Calvary, shining and transfiguring it, the eternal and indestructible

love of God, which will never depart from man, and from which the soul which hopes in Him is never separated by life or by death.

It seems often and often in the history of the world that if men will have their wicked way they must, and their wickedness must work itself out to its full consequences—consequences in which the innocent are always involved, and which are overruled by God for the ultimate good of men. Yet do we feel that it is our business to prevent wickedness and to put it down, to destroy the works of the devil where-soever possible and by such means as God will allow. And we both hope and believe that out of this time of unparalleled suffering and anguish into which the world has been plunged by the jealousies and ambitions and hatreds of men, there will come a permanent good for the nations.

¶ When we question if any good can come out of this holocaust of war and inquire if anything favourable to the advance of the human spirit is achieved, we should remember how Providence has sometimes redirected war waged for other purposes to further a beneficent purpose and to remove fatal obstacles to human progress. When Constantinople was captured by the Turks in 1453, the home of culture was broken up by what seemed a catastrophe for Christian learning, and scholars fled westward. But the tragedy was changed to triumph in the Renaissance, which freed Europe from the ignorance of the Dark Ages and gave an impetus to the Reformation. Again, the American Civil War was waged primarily to prevent the Southern states from seceding from the Union and crippling the American nation by partition, but it resulted in the abolition of negro slavery. Revolting as war is, God does not refuse to touch it, but may so handle it to-day as to bring relief to terrorized nations and enslaved peoples and to give them scope to grow up to their full stature. This struggle may be so captured by Him as to clear the way for a new world, if men have the new heart to travel the road prepared for them.¹

The place from which to view all the convulsion and evils of these times is the place of communion with God. We know what Keble says :

But He who sees God's face may brook
On the true face of sin to look.

¹ Leslie D. Weatherhead, *This is the Victory*.

¹ A. A. Cowan, *Captain of the Storm*, 36.

Even his own sin, his treachery and foulness and folly, for there he will see the love that will punish and which can forgive, and the power that can overcome and the righteousness that will destroy. What we need to feel to-day is that the righteousness of God is not changed by the wickedness of men; that His goodness abides amidst all human evil, and His love remains unaltered in the midst of all the hatreds and spites of men; that He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows. We need that revelation—not that we may luxuriate in it, but that we may be strengthened by it to bear our part, to endure and to suffer patiently and to fight and strive bravely, and to aid the bringing in of that time for which, surely, the whole creation waits and cries, when the God of righteousness and love shall reign in all lands and in all hearts, and men shall turn from their follies and sins and crimes with penitent and obedient hearts to Him.

A Hand as Curtain

Exod. xxxiii. 21-23.—‘And the Lord said . . . I . . . will cover thee with my hand. . . . I will take away mine hand.’

VERY fascinating is this singular experience which came to Moses upon the Mount, wherein the glory of God passed him by as he stood trembling in a cleft of the rock, and a great Divine hand screened him at first as a curtain from the unbearable light, and then was withdrawn to admit it, when its fierce rays had been sufficiently tempered to be bearable by mortal eyes.

It is of course impossible to express such an experience in precise terms of matter-of-fact language. Moses himself, or some one writing for him, has done just that, and in so far as he has succeeded, has made the passage difficult of understanding for us to-day.

The mind recoils from a visualization of the Eternal striding by the place of Moses' concealment, with fiercer rays of light proceeding from His countenance than those that shone like an aureole when seen from behind. The great hand itself, objectively conceived, is not suited for the fleshly eye to see. But the humblest soul knows that the great occurrence is valid, for it has passed through at least its outer fringes.

1. On the broadest possible scale we recognize the truth of this presentment.

How difficult from the point of view of Omniscience must be His relations with man! How can the All-Wise keep in step with the groping sons of folly? How can the Eternal accommodate Himself to the ephemeral? How can the All-Holy maintain contact with vacillating and ever-sinning man? How can He whose ultimate purpose must be inflexible, because only wisdom is finally possible to Him, refrain from crushing ‘the greatest gift that in His largess God creating made,’ the freedom of the will wherewith He has endowed us?

We speak much of the difficulty of worshipping God whom we cannot know, but may not the supreme accomplishment of the universe be that God who *does* know man should continue to let His presence go with him? If God *will* consort with man, what is there left for Him to do but to screen His approach and graciously reveal His receding form?

Sufficient for us if we know that the curtain, drawn obscuringly across our hiding-place and then drawn back revealingly, is the curtain of a Hand. The image may be faulty, as all sense-imagery must be, but the hand is the symbol of power, of mastery, of friendship, of helpfulness, and the pledge of a near Presence.

2. Nor does the experience of Moses fail us when we take a nearer and more personal view of life. God has always come to us with obscured face. His hand screened us in the cleft of the rock. If life depended upon pre-vision how few of us would venture to live. If we had compelling power to wish and were wise, the last thing to wish for might well be pre-vision.

¶ In an auction sale of relics there was sold a small piece of paper signed by both Emily and Anne Brontë. It was dated 1830, and on it was written: ‘Anne and I say, “I wonder what we shall be like, and what we shall be, and where we shall be if all goes on well, in the year 1874” —in which year I shall be in my 57th year.’ Both girls, just as they had given the world glimpses of their genius, fell victims to consumption and died—Emily in December 1848, and Anne Brontë in the following year.

We often say about our sorrows that we are thankful that we did not see them coming. Why should all the flowers have withered as we came along the road? When the sorrow came we

were strangely more prepared for it than we would have thought possible. Where those resources came from we have never discovered. When that sorrow leapt out upon us like a wild beast from the jungle, it did not crush us after all. Somehow and from somewhere resources had been gathered within our soul. It was better that we had come along the flowery road before the hour of our crisis came upon us.

It is also true with regard to our joys and successes. Was not life's greatest success all the better because it had been but partially anticipated? Had we seen it clearly before us through the long years, could we have sustained the period of waiting? Could we have learned in the dark those lessons which were surely needed when success came at last? Could we have learned to be our own captain except by adversity? But for that our success, when it came, might have broken and shattered us? Would not its very sweetness have become embittered by long anticipation? Is it not true that for a brave heart at least there is wondrous mercy in the shrouded face of God, in the hand which screens our destiny?

3. Pre-vision is not life's greatest need, or at best is but a partial need. But we may look after God—that is the soul's sure and abiding privilege. Anticipating God is folly, looking after Him is reverence and religion.

Is it not true that most of our vision concerning the future is the reflection from our knowledge of the past? Never trust a prophet who does not know history. That which hath been holds that which shall be like a babe within its arms. If wisdom comes with age, as it ought to come, it comes because the long path of experience is more clearly seen, and men learn some truths about things which are yet to be because of their remembrance of things that have been.

Herein is the wisdom of age greater than that of youth. Hopes are birds upon the wing; memories are birds upon the nest. There is a sense in which we know more of life the less we have of it to spend. Happiness is not in what we clutch but in what we can thankfully remember. We strain after the future, but we keep only the past. Do not let us stain the present, lest it be a soiled thing when it has become the past. To see the glory of God after He has passed by is the soul's abiding privilege.

We go out into the pathway after God has

gone by and, looking back in the softened light of memory, we read some of the meaning of things. Not until a thing *is* has it intelligible meaning. It is at the moment when it is actualized that it becomes luminous. Things are not born until they happen, but when do they die? Five minutes before the event they were not, fifty years afterward they still are. We speak satirically sometimes of men who are wise after the event, but who can be wise before it? Are we sure we could act more wisely if we foreknew? It is a good thing for men to march with their fellow-men, seeing an inch or two farther maybe, but not too far. It is good to have a hand that screens as well as a hand that reveals.

The Almighty has put us here so that some things might become possible in the wider realms to which the spirit goes that would never have been possible without the life we have lived here. It is not simply because we are growing older and our powers are failing that we seem to finish our life with our back turned towards to-morrow and our face towards yesterday. It is in yesterday that life's greatest meanings lie.

Spiritually-minded people may be conscious of God's shadowy hand many times in life, but every man knows it at last. When we come to the hour of death a great hand covers us and we know it. Every man in that hour, conscious of the impenetrable darkness, says within his heart, 'Into thy hands I commit my spirit,' and shuts his own eyes as the symbol of his blindness and yet of his trust. The shielding hand is life's latest mercy. If God were to finish speaking then, it might well be a tragedy, but the last word is, 'I will take away mine hand.'

There no shade can last,

In that deep dawn behind the tomb,

But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past.

God's Vanishing Form

Exod. xxxiii. 22, 23.—'I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen.'

HERE is a thought for all time. 'My face shall not be seen,' that is to say, never in this world

shall we be able to demonstrate the being of God like a proposition in geometry. There are good Christian people who need to be reminded of this fact. They are just a little too sure of God. The ineffable Name carries little or no mystery with it for these well-meaning people. Our assurance of God may border on blasphemy. If men knew everything, they would reverence nothing.

But if God hides His face, He vouchsafes to us a glimpse of His form, going ahead, luring us on—and that suffices for faith.

1. Let us see this thing happening in the experience of nations and men. It will be long ere men cease to wonder at what happened at Dunkirk. That amazing event brought different reactions from different people. Here is how a present-day poetess saw these men :

They looked at Death
And with him, nonchalantly
passed the time of day.
He paused, bewildered, said
beneath his breath,
'Immortals these,' and laid
his scythe away.

Then there is the literalist, the man who prides himself on calling a spade a spade. Dunkirk, he says, was no more than a triumph of human endurance and organization, perfect timing on land, sea, and air, the swift massing of all kinds of craft from a battleship to a pinnacle—these and lucky weather conditions, and you have—Dunkirk.

Have we? Some of us think otherwise. With bated breath, day after day we watched these three hundred thousand men lining the beach on the other side of the Channel. And then they seemed to disappear from our view. In the interval, something happened which we believe can never be explained in merely human terms. A Hand seemed to cover them. A mist hid them from our view. When the scene cleared, they were safe on the shores of England. Surely God was here. We did not see His Face, but we saw, with the eye of faith, His vanishing Form.

Have there been no such experiences in our own life? Have not things happened in our family life, in our business life, in the abysmal privacy of our own heart, which could be

explained only in one way? Dull must be our imagination and poor our memory if we cannot point to situations quite desperate, out of which, with awe and thankfulness, we saw God's form vanishing before our eyes. Think of that temptation where, humanly speaking, it was all over with us, and yet we weathered the grim period and came through; that long, intolerable weight of anxiety in business which, somehow, ended at last; that disaster which hovered over us and, strangely, broke in blessings on our heads; that eclipse of faith in our fellow-men, through the betrayal of our trust in some one we loved, which we gradually outlived. Or recall that shattering bereavement which turned life to gall and bitterness—yet, somehow, slowly and with many a relapse, led us at last into a land of sympathy and understanding for our fellows. As we revisit these altars of the past, would we not say that, if life has taught us anything, it has burned into our soul the strong belief that though God wraps Himself in utter mystery, He gives us many a glimpse of His form? In these vivid experiences, we have—though but for a moment—seen Him, almost touched Him, felt His breath on our faces, watched Him luring us on, and we could not choose but go. 'Thou shalt see my back, though my face shall not be seen.'

Dr Gossip has related in his own mystic way an experience that befell him in the course of his pastoral visitation in Glasgow. Going home one dark night, tired to the bone after a hard day's work, he stood hesitating at the foot of a close. "I will go to-morrow," I determined, and was turning back when Some One passed me, and went up. And I knew who it was! Yes! Yes! quite so, not a doubt of it! Just tired nerves, as you say. But I knew who it was, heard Him say, "Well, if you won't go, then I must go Myself"; saw indeed only a dim greyness of mounting shoulders, dreadfully tired shoulders. But I knew Who it was, flushed to my soul, and ran up after Him, and Christ and I went in together.¹

Amid our business harassments which seem to pile up like a mountain, amid our sore yearnings after our sons and daughters on service, amid the ordeal of living on unstrung nerves, among people who try us to the uttermost, amid the disastrous events which put a constant strain on our religious faith—amid all these things, let

¹ *In Christ's Stead*, 40.

us never lose sight of that Form which moves ahead. We cannot see His face, but His figure has never wholly vanished, even in our darkest hour. Let us believe, and follow on. Strangely, yet surely, we shall be made adequate to life's heavy burden. We shall not be confounded by evil tidings, or defeated in the clash of temperaments, or left without a witness in our heart that this earthly scene is not wholly Godless. Again and again we shall have the glimpse of Him ahead of us which will enable us gallantly to carry on.

2. Life in its deepest reality is a quest, a journey in hope. Broadly speaking, it seems that there are two ways in which men are led on to their destiny. Is it mere imagination, or is it a fact of life that the look in the eye betrayeth us? As we walk the city streets and study human faces, do we not often discern in the eyes of many a man and woman a strange, restless look? They are out on a search for something that ever eludes them. In the end, God is not mocked. We cannot, finally, do despite to the way in which He has made us. He has set eternity in our hearts, and woe be to us if we ever forget it!

But there is another quest which will prove at last to be no moving mockery but will guide us to our true destiny. The spiritual life, in its essence and in its mystery, is the discovery of a clue, the clinging to a hope, the following of a Form. And the Christian is the man who, as he reads the meaning of his soul's history is impelled by a thousand instances of God's utter faithfulness, and everlasting mercy, and patient, redeeming, purifying love, to follow on—convinced that life's supreme tragedy for him would be in any way to be cut off from the source of so much goodness and forgiving love.

¶ It is said that, when Garibaldi led an attack against the Austrians, he never looked back to see if his men were following; he knew to a dead certainty that, at the moment when he reached the enemy, he would feel their breath hot on the back of his neck.

Is God for us only a problem, a doubt, a speculation? Or is He One whom, out of countless deliverances, mercies, blessings, restorations, calls, and recalls, we feel constrained to follow eagerly, blindly, devotedly to the end of our days? Then let us obey the call of our own heart and make it the supreme concern of our

life never, come loss or gain, bitterest sorrow or darkest despair, to suffer that Form to pass out of our sight. And one day, the thing denied us here will be granted us there, where 'His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be on their foreheads, *and they shall see His face!*'¹

Renewal

Exod. xxxiv. 1.—'And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.'

It is quite impossible to read the Bible without being arrested by its promises of renewal to men who have failed. One of the clamant notes in the harmony of Divine revelation is that which declares to penitent, broken-spirited men that God restores to them the mercies which they have forfeited; that He renews to them the grace which they have misused; that every day may be one of new beginning to men who have lost their grip and missed their foothold.

Every day is a fresh beginning,

Every morn is the world made new:

You who are weary of sorrow and sinning,

Here is a beautiful hope for you—

A hope for me, and a hope for you.²

1. Moses comes down from the mount with God's law which is to establish the nation in righteousness. In that awe-inspiring communion of forty days with God he had come to recognize something of his partnership with Jehovah. God had become much more than a name to Moses in those days. He had become to him not only the Law-giver, but the life by which the law alone can be kept. God had become known to him as the controlling power of righteousness, the enemy of all evil, the inspiration of order in every sphere. And under the impulse of that new apprehension he is moved to hot anger and indignation by the failure of the people to see what had become so plain to him—the nature, the character, the claim of God. Under the very shadow of the mount of God, and of his most august and

¹ G. J. Jeffrey, *Christian Resources*, 33.

² Susan Coolidge.

inspiring experience, he shatters the law of God in his indignant zeal.

The failure of Israel was stupendous. The moral catastrophe which overtook the nation when they forsook God, who had so recently brought them out of Egypt, going back in heart to the defilements of the land of their enslavement, is altogether beyond words. But the failure of Moses was infinitely greater. He lost hold of himself, and he lost hold on the laws of God. He sinned not only against Israel, but he sinned against God and against his own experience. Only one thing remained when he had shattered the law of God—only one thing. And that thing was found not alone in his need but in the greatness of God's nature and of God's mercy. Deep answered to deep in that overwhelming hour of Moses' life. The record of these words of grace, which become more luminous every time we read them, is the record of a grace which is positively immeasurable. 'I will write upon these tables the words which were in the first tables which thou brakest.' Hence Moses prays under the inspiration of this great word of God, and his prayer is recorded—'Shew me thy ways.' How appealing is the diffidence of the man who knows his failings, who has missed the way of God. 'Lord, shew me thy ways!' 'Lord, shew me thy glory,' he goes on to pray. For he knows he has missed the glory of God and has lost the track in his blind and head-strong folly.

And the answer is this gospel of the Divine renewal—which is ever God's response to penitent purpose and purposeful penitence.

2. Let us consider the steps by which these blessings were realized by Moses, and by which also they may be realized by every one of us.

(1) Notice, first, the invitation to 'come up.' 'Come back to the place of your failure, and then,' said God, 'get past it! Come higher up still. Come back to the place where temptation overcame you, where you slipped your moorings and failed; and get right beyond it.' What a rebuke to the hopelessness of the prophet, and what a rekindling of hope by the revelation of the possibility of another chance! It puts spring into his step and faith in his heart. And if similar experience is to be ours we, too, have to get back to the primary things in these days—back to the august holiness of God, back to the precious Blood of Jesus Christ,

back to the promises of God, eternal as His own nature which is our ultimate security. We have to hearken and respond anew to God's loving invitation.

My blood so red
For thee was shed.
Come home again! Come home again!
My own dear heart, come home again.
You've gone astray,
Far from your way.
Come home again! Come home again!

(2) You will notice, in the second place, it is prescribed that Moses comes up alone, that no man is to come up with him. This is an adventure which he must make in solitary confidence in the God who has called him. This is to be an experience in the life of Moses which supersedes everything else by its sheer necessity. Hence with considerable detail—all pointing to the same meaning, direction is given as to his approach and ascent of the mount. There will be subsequent relationships with men; but for the present good of his own soul and the immediate readjustment of an outraged relationship, he must 'come up' alone.

We shall never find what we most need in the crowd. Get up into the mount with God. Face God! Take yourself ruthlessly in hand! Let every other interest in life be superseded by the supreme necessity of this one thing—to recover your lost ground and to regain your forfeited fellowship with high Heaven.

¶ In the struggle to regain a lost status we must not expect too much sympathy and aid from the outside. The world is not too ready to believe in men who have failed in moral life, or to assist them to rise again. We are so constituted by God, and life is so determined, that every one must bear his own burden, and the limit of helping our neighbour is soon reached when he abstains from helping himself. Human sympathy can be effective only through our personal effort, and God Himself can save us only as we seek Him with all our heart. Savage Landor has this reflection: 'Little is that which any man can give us; but that which we can give ourselves is infinitely great. This of all truths, when acted upon consistently, is the most important to our happiness and glory.' There is much truth here as the passage applies to temporal life, but it is yet more so as it applies

to spiritual life. Trusting little to human intervention, we must call upon all that is within us to the rescue, and after that we cannot trust too much to Him who came 'to seek and to save that which was lost.'¹

(3) A third thing claims our attention—that God gives him the assurance of a renewal which shall carry him infinitely further than his original experience. For listen to what God says to him: 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee; I will be gracious unto thee and will shew mercy. I will put thee in a cleft of the rock and cover thee with the shadow of my hand; and then I will write upon these tables which you bring up to me in contrition and repentance the words which were on the first ones.' God covenants to give him a new copy of a dishonoured gospel, but with a new and sanctifying sense of the goodness, the grace, the mercy, which constitute His glory. This is the blessing that awaits us: nothing less—and there can be nothing more—than a new copy of a dishonoured gospel, and this time written not as an outward law which we may read and forget, but 'in their minds I will write it, and in their hearts I will put it.' A gospel, yes; but a gospel reinforced with an experience of Divine love which shall convert for us all its precepts into possibilities and all its light into life.

The outcome of this incident was that Moses went down from the mount with the supporting inspiration that God had trusted him despite everything. And that inspiration was such a living thing, such a resurgence within his being, that his face shone from the inner radiance of his life, and 'he wist not that his face shone.' And it is ever the man of the mount who will be the light of the darkness below. It is the man whose own experience of God has been renewed in the sanctity of silence, who will go forth to bless men in His Name, unconsciously reflecting a radiance which none can miss and none can mistake.

God in the Cloud

Exod. xxxiv. 5.—'The Lord descended in the cloud.'

THE cloud, throughout the Bible, appears again and again as the visible sign of the invisible presence of God—visiting, protecting, guiding,

¹ W. L. Watkinson.

instructing, and inspiring His people. As St Paul writes in one of his letters, 'All our fathers were under the cloud.' They did not always understand the cloud. They did not always appreciate its true significance and value. They were not always content to abide underneath its covering. Often, on the contrary, they were impatient of the cloud and called it bitter names. But it was a Divine cloud all the same. If it cast a solemn shadow over human lives, it was the shadow of God's Providence and goodness and compassion.

'The Lord descended in the cloud.' At the present time, as never before in the whole history of mankind, the firmament of the world is darkened. Colossal clouds of war, black and furious and jagged, have swept across our skies and blotted out the blue for well-nigh every civilized nation. Well, we look up at those clouds, and we cannot help wondering about them. What are they there for? In what way should we interpret them? Are they entirely evil, the very handiwork of the devil, or may there be some blessing in them? Yes, the cloud at the present moment is our gravest and most pressing problem. But we may be helped, perhaps, to understand some of its meaning, if we consider more attentively the symbolism of cloudland.

1. To begin with, the cloud is suggestive of *mystery*. 'Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?' cries the ancient poet. 'Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge?' And Ruskin, who has done more perhaps than any other writer to impress on us the wonder and the beauty of the clouds, speaks much to the same effect. In his *Modern Painters* he refers to what he calls the 'inscrutable' questions concerning the substance and shape and division and motion of the clouds, and declares that such questions lead partly far away into high mathematics and partly into theories concerning electricity and infinite space, where 'at present no one can follow them.' 'What, then,' he concludes, 'is the use of asking the questions? For my part I enjoy the mystery, and perhaps the reader may. He should not be less grateful for summer rain, or see less beauty in the clouds of morning, because they come to prove him with hard questions.'

And the clouds which obscure our life—are

they not equally mysterious? Who can explain trouble? Who can explain the terror of Cimmerian darkness that hangs over the world to-day? Do we think that we have solved the problem of the cloud when we offer the explanation that Japan is afflicted with militarist dementia, or that the spirit of Nietzsche has taken possession of the German people? Do we think that we have solved it, when we talk of the growth of armaments, or the underground methods of European diplomacy, or the slackness and selfishness of contemporary civilization? No one of these explanations can account fully and satisfactorily for the present situation. An overwhelming cloud of suffering has spread itself over the firmament. Why is it there? Nobody knows. How long will it be there? Again, nobody knows.

Harsh, horrible, and strong
Rises to Heaven the agonising cry,
Filling the arches of the hollow sky,
How long, O God, how long?

Now all this would be simply intolerable, if we could not be certain of one thing—that 'the Lord descended in the cloud.' This beclouding of our heaven does not happen apart from God. He is not outside and far away and looking on; He is centrally in the midst of it. This does not, of course, do away with the mystery of sorrow, the mystery of suffering, the mystery of catastrophe. We do not understand it, and this side of the grave we in all probability never shall understand it. But to understand is not essential. What is essential is that we should cling fast to the vital truth that, in some way or other that we cannot at present discern, the Father of Lights is in the cloud. We shall never have a moment's peace till we give up our futile attempts to analyse the cloud, and commit ourselves with trustfulness to the sure, though unprovable, fact of the Infinite Love that is hidden within the cloud. Then, and then only, shall we be able to pray with sincerity the prayer of the pious Fénelon—'Smite or heal. Depress or raise me up. I adore all Thy purposes *without knowing them.*'

2. The cloud is also suggestive of *illusion*. It is different from what it appears. We fancy, for instance, that we see a narrow streak of violet or gold like a line across the horizon; but

what we really see is a vast expanse of colourless vapour that is extended over an area of any number of square miles.

Forming and breaking in the sky
I fancy all shapes are there;
Temple, mountain, monument, spire,
Ships rigged out with sails of fire,
And blown by the evening air.

But it is only idle fancy. We have no correct ideas of the cloud forms or their magnitudes.

And the clouds which shadow our life, like the clouds which shroud our heaven, are misleading and illusive. 'This world is all a fleeting show for man's illusion given,' sings Thomas Moore; and the sentiment applies no less to the dark and ugly things of life than to those that are bright and beautiful. Take, for instance, the cloud of suffering. Does it not happen again and again that the cloud which overhangs the sufferer is a beneficent, merciful cloud? Under its shadow we learn sympathy and gentleness and compassion. In the dusk we gain strength of character and refinement of soul. We are made to perceive with Chalmers, after the illness which changed his life, 'the littleness of time and the greatness of eternity.' Sometimes, like Faithful in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, we are carried up through the cloud, 'the nearest way to the celestial gate.' And so we find out by experience that our cloud is entirely different from what we originally imagined.

3. The cloud, then, is suggestive of mystery and suggestive of illusion; but in the Bible, strangely enough, it is also and pre-eminently suggestive of *revelation*. After all, it is less a veil than a lifting of the veil. As a modern expositor puts it—'Veiling the glory which no mortal might see and live, veiling yet revealing the presence of God, the cloud has two aspects, of which the greater and more characteristic is not the negative one of veiling, but that positive aspect in which it attests and manifests the Divine Presence.' Yes, out of the cloud to Moses, out of the cloud to the Apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, came the eternal Voice, bringing to each their highest and most plenary revelation.

And we, too, have our cloud-revelations—have we not? In the days of sunshine and prosperity, when everything is well with us, we

do not often listen to the Voice of God. We have so much to do, and so much to think about—we are so busy and so noisy, that we rarely pay attention to the ‘still, small voice.’ But the cloud gathers and spreads, and a hush falls all about us, and the voices of the world are faint and muffled. And then, in the dimness and solitude, when we sit alone with our anxieties, there comes to us the Voice that we seldom hear in happier times, and we are vouchsafed the Divine revelation that is reserved for the clouded hours of suspense, disenchantment, and sorrow.

Who never mourn'd hath never known
What treasures grief reveals,
The sympathies that humanize,
The tenderness that heals.

The power to look within the veil,
And learn the heavenly lore,
The keyword to life's mysteries
So dark to us before.

Yes, it is the Divine Voice that speaks to us out of the cloud : and the one thing of real and infinite importance is that we should listen and pay attention to it. What is God saying in this darkness ? What new teaching is He giving ? What new truth is He revealing ? What heavenly law is He proclaiming for the life of the world and for our own individual life ? A sound has gone forth from the war-cloud : do we recognize the Voice of God, or do we say merely that it thundered ? So in these mournful days we seem to be conscious of some grave appeal, to listen and think, and think and listen. And shall we not obey ? Shall we not listen to the cloud-voice, and try to understand its mandate ? Shall we not echo the impassioned prayer of Martin Luther—‘ Oh my God, punish far rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sicknesses on earth, with war, with anything, rather than that Thou be silent to us ? ’

‘ The Lord descended in the cloud. ’ There is Divinity in the cloud. It is not all black. It is not all bad. In the heart of it is concealed Divine Love and Divine Wisdom. And, with that faith for our support, we are able to carry on, though all the world be in shadow about us. We can trust God to see us through.

An Inspired Utterance

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.—‘ And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin : and that will by no means clear the guilty ’ (R.V.).

1. THE text states two things about God. It states that He is at once infinitely righteous and infinitely merciful. Not that the adverb ‘ infinitely ’ is used, but in the simple speech of those early days its equivalent is intended. The righteousness and the mercy of God soar far away beyond the writer's power of measurement or description.

Now it matters little to what century that writing is ascribed. Give it a place anywhere between the tenth and the seventh B.C. In any case it is most remarkable. No doubt the summit is not yet quite reached. The second verse of the text ends with the words ‘ visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. ’ That also is true ; but it is truth in its sternest aspect. The evil that men do very often does not die with them : its consequences are felt, and its punishment is felt, far down the line of their descendants. And yet it is an advance in religious teaching when we come to Ezekiel, and when we have the clear affirmation of individual responsibility. ‘ The soul that sinneth it shall die : the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. ’ Such is the way in which one religious truth is made the stepping-stone to another deeper or truer truth. The world could not learn its lesson all at once.

Still, all through, from Exodus to Romans, it is the same double truth that is there : ‘ Gracious, and that will by no means clear the guilty, ’ ‘ Just and the justifier ’ ; and the question is, where did Israel get it ? What other ancient people had such an intense hold on those two propositions ? What ancient prophet or seer outside Israel lifted up his voice to proclaim them with such thrilling accents ? If it was not Moses himself, yet the prophet who spoke for Moses spoke from his heart and put a weight of meaning into his words. He evidently was not

one who thought lightly of sin. The Greeks were a noble race. They had a delight in virtue and a scorn of baseness. They had in their best representatives a dim and awful sense that there were actions which gave offence to the Powers above and called down a terrible and slowly working vengeance. But those who thought on these grave problems were almost overpowered by their mystery. Not even the best of the Greeks, centuries later, at the height of their culture and refinement, could have formulated his belief in language so earnest yet so simple, so adequate to the mighty truths with which it was charged.

2. Was it experience that gave Israel this wonderful insight? We can imagine a nation laying stress on the mercy and love of God as it sat at ease under its vines and under its fig-trees, contemplating the heavens the work of His hands and the wonderful things which He had done for the children of men. There was no nation which had such a wistful appreciation of the blessings of prosperity and peace. But how small a time had Israel for the enjoyment of these! How shortlived were its experiences of good fortune, how long and how bitter was its experience of the reverse! We, in these days, in the midst of physical comforts in which there is not a class that does not share, yet have pessimists enough in our midst. But turn from the state of things now, and look back at the social condition of the weak and poor in antiquity generally, and especially in a feeble and insignificant little nation which had all that it could do in simply maintaining its independence for some few centuries. Think of the fearful cruelties that were practised almost as a matter of course, as one may see them for instance on the Assyrian sculptures; think of the constant oppression of the weak by the strong; the trampling down of all law and right, now by the foreigner, now by those born in the land. When we try to picture to ourselves the actual condition of Israel in the successive periods of their history, we can hardly fail to be deeply impressed with the fact that they of all peoples had such an extraordinary faith in the goodness, the justice, the loving-kindness of God.

Nor was it that Israel looked out upon the things around her and returned and said, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious.' No nation by natural or scientific searching

has ever found out a God slow to anger. And, as a matter of fact, when Hebrew prophet or psalmist does look out into the world and sets down what he sees, the language which he uses is quite different: 'The earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations'; 'Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.'

No doubt upon the whole there has been a real amelioration of social conditions. The number of those who have reason to 'praise the Lord for His goodness' has greatly increased. And yet the phrases with which we are most familiar, are they not such as the 'battle of life' and the 'struggle for existence'? For along with this improvement there has gone a greatly increased knowledge. We know far more than we did about the workings of Nature and the life-history of other creatures besides man. And when we say 'Plenteous in mercy,' then Nature, 'red in tooth and claw with ravine, shrieks against our creed.'

¶ 'In sober truth,' writes John Stuart Mill, 'nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are Nature's everyday performances. . . . She is replete with everything which when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence; any one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men.'

¶ 'I cannot,' said Huxley, writing to Kingsley, 'I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great Unknown, underlying the phenomena of the universe, stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts.'

3. But if no experience and no experiment can discover that God is plenteous in mercy, what guarantee have we that it is true? *Try it.* What experiment cannot discover, experience may very well verify. There are some things, indeed, which cannot be obtained in any other way than this, by first making the venture. There are two lines of Wordsworth's *Poet's Epitaph* which describe a number of processes besides that to which they are applied. And you must love him, it is said of the poet—

And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

How many things there are which must be loved first before they can be properly understood. How many propositions there are which we must begin by accepting as true, begin by acting upon and testing and applying steadily to practice, before we can form any idea of the amount of real evidence there is for them. There is an anticipatory action in the human mind which sometimes forms its propositions first and proves them afterwards, and which could not prove them in any other way. In the strict terminology of logic we should call such propositions hypotheses. They are assumed provisionally, in order to be tested by degrees as to whether they can be received as part of the permanent stock of the mind or not. In the language of logic and formal reasoning we should have to call these propositions in the Book of Exodus hypotheses.

But in tone nothing could be less like what we commonly associate with the idea of 'hypothesis.' Usually hypothesis is tentative, and is conscious of being tentative. The language of the Book of Exodus is very different from this. It is indeed characteristic of the Bible as a whole. There are regions of exploration in it where the mind seems to be groping its way in the twilight; but this is not one of them. The great leading propositions of Old Testament religion are not put forward tentatively. They take the shape nearly always of dogmatic indicatives and categorical imperatives. There is no verb at all in the two verses we have quoted. They are simply an enlarged 'Name' in the pregnant Biblical use of the word 'Name.' We could imagine them inscribed upon the rocks of Sinai in letters of light for the assembled people to behold, and once beheld to take into their minds and never let them go again.

Shall we be wrong if we call this process 'revelation'? Shall we be wrong if we say that the writer of the Book of Exodus, or of the document incorporated in the Book of Exodus, was 'inspired' to write it? that he wrote it in obedience to a prompting from the Spirit of God? That is the account which the Old Testament generally gives of itself. All these categorical statements about the Being and Attributes of God and His dealings with men, the prophets and holy men, who first spoke and then wrote, or who wrote without speaking, the Books of the Old Testament, ascribed to the direct action of God Himself. 'God said,'

'the Word of the Lord came to me' are the regular formulæ which they use.

But is not this a rather crude mode of presentation? Is it not just an instance of the supposition common among the ancients, that the Divinity said through a man what he felt strongly moved to say? That is our rationalistic way of describing such things. But are we sure that our rationalism is right, and that the ancient way of speaking was not after all the more correct of the two? It is not as if the Hebrews had not strong emotions, and did not often express strongly what they felt as men. Of course they did this. But they distinguish where we do not distinguish. A large proportion of their utterances they would have described as we do, but just this one group they set apart; just this one group they describe as not arising spontaneously in their own mind, but as put there by God.

May we not take them at their word? If these truths had not been revealed, if God had not willed that they should be known and caused them to be known, there is no seeing how they should ever have been reached at all. The Sacred Writers themselves utterly disclaim any of the merit of discovery. The truths which they preach did not come to them by any human effort or 'taking thought.' The struggles which we see in the minds of prophets and wise men were not of that kind. The experience of these men was to us and with reference to our standards a unique experience; and it seems to deserve a unique name.

The Best for God

Exod. xxxiv. 26.—'The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God.'

'THE first of the firstfruits!' An offering of all that was most choice and desirable! The very best for God! No war-time bread for loaves of wheaten flour. Malachi denounced the Israelites of his time who thought to acquit themselves of their obligation by bringing a maimed sacrifice into the sanctuary: 'And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not an evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not an evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?' Given that Israel carried out the command of

the text, what a display it would be ! What a festival indeed !

Fair waved the golden corn,
In Canaan's pleasant land,
When full of joy, some shining morn,
Went forth the reaper band.

To God, so good and great,
Their cheerful thanks they pour,
Then carry to His temple gate
The choicest of their store.

But how exacting all this seems. Does God always demand the best like this ? We shall let the following story reply. It is recorded that Nietzsche and his sister in their young days decided, on one occasion, to give a toy each to the Moravians. Having duly presented them, Nietzsche, in particular, returned looking very unhappy. 'I have done a very wicked thing,' he said to his sister. 'What I should have taken,' he added, 'was my fine box of cavalry ; that's my favourite toy.' 'But,' said the little girl, hoping to comfort him, 'do you think God always wants our best ?' 'Always, always !' replied Nietzsche. And in that matter, at least, Nietzsche was right. God always wants our best. The utmost we can give. The finest workmanship of which we are capable. In all things — 'the first of the firstfruits.'

But, it may be argued, on what grounds can these demands be sustained ? Why should we give God our best ?

1. *Because of His rightful claim to our best.* 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.' We are the creation of His hand. The life we live, we live only because every moment He breathes into us the breath of life. We are 'the sheep of His pasture,' guarded and sustained by Him. Who, therefore, will not say, if only on these grounds, God deserves, and rightly claims, our best ?

And the wonderful gift of the harvest only brings home to us this same indebtedness. What is the harvest (speaking in this sense of the word) but the expression of God's 'best' towards us—the product of His best thought, His best powers, His best impulses in terms of temporal plenty and goodness ? For it is ours to realize that God does not merely 'smile' a harvest into being. It is not the result of a mere

volition, nor is it the outcome of some reasonable word of command. It is the product of a Divine mind and will at work, putting His best into it all for our good and our need. 'My Father worketh, and I work'—and the harvest results.

If, then, God puts Himself at such pains to provide for our needs, to sustain within us the breath of life and to fill our days with the good things His gracious hand supplies, ought we to come before Him with anything less than the best we can bestow ? For the best He is constantly giving to us we say, 'The first of the firstfruits' for our God !

2. We should give God our best, *because only God is worthy of our best.* A modern essayist makes an interesting comment on the story of the Syrian backwoodsman, as recorded in Isaiah. A big, brawny backwoodsman, equipped with heavy axe, goes forth into the forest to fell trees. Passing along, he notes one in particular, a cedar-tree, and commences, forthwith, his task. Taking up his axe and aiming blow after blow, the huge thing begins to totter and to waver. A few more blows and the mighty monarch crashes to the earth. The backwoodsman lays down his axe, wipes the sweat from his brow, and spends a little time in quiet survey. Then an interesting process takes place. He proceeds to cut the log into three. Having cut it up, he apportions each piece its function. The first he devotes to the cooking of his food. The second he uses for a fire by which to warm himself. The third, 'the residue thereof,' he gives to his god. As the essayist puts it, 'his leavings to his god. But there,' he adds, 'he was only an idolater . . . and perhaps his god was only worthy of a third place.'

'The residue, the leavings, for his god.' But surely not for our God. For the heathen's god, yes, but not for the Christian's. What a different spirit was that of David in covenanting for Araunah's threshing-floor whereby 'to build an altar unto the lord.' 'Oh, yes,' said Araunah, 'let my lord the king take . . . what seemeth good unto him, and here,' he adds, 'are oxen and threshing instruments into the bargain.' 'Oh no,' replies David, 'not on those terms. It is not for me to offer God that which costs me nothing.' David's spirit was this: the 'utmost for the Highest.' And in that, in principle and in practice, we do well to concur.

¶ Dr Charles W. Mitchell, whose generous

gifts to Aberdeen University promoted the Marischal College, also made himself responsible for the building of a beautiful church in the town of Jesmond, near Newcastle. In architecture and in adornment, in material and masonry, the church is as perfect as man can make it. When it was suggested that something less costly might have served the purpose, his answer was: 'When I build a ship I see to it that the best plank I can find is put into it from stem to stern. I do this for a dwelling-place for men. Shall I do less for God?'

3. But the supreme claim as to why we should give God our best is *because in Jesus Christ God has given His best for us*. There is a story told of an American woman whose death brought to her heirs an extraordinary collection of jewels. One of the most prized was a bracelet of gold, set with emeralds, with a miniature of a member of the Austrian royal family within it. The bracelet, it appears, had been given as a reward for saving this royal member on an occasion of real peril. The piece of jewellery coming into the hands of one of the heirs, the heir thought he would submit it for valuation. The valuer, applying his tests, wrote his valuation—a valuation that was but a fraction of what the heir deemed it to be worth. Protesting against it, he handed it back again to be checked. The valuer did so, only to find it as correct as before. 'But they are not first-rate stones,' he said. 'Not first rate,' protested the man. 'How do you make that out? Why, they are royal gifts.' 'Ah!' replied the valuer, significantly, 'I've handled many royal gifts, but have learned long ago that kings keep the best for themselves!' What an illuminating reply, if true. And, again, if it is true, what a reflection on kings! But, true or not, it is not so of our King. With Him it was just the reverse. Instead of keeping the best for Himself, He delivered up that best, in Jesus Christ, for us all: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.'

Then, if He has given His best for us, should we not bring to Him our best? Let us bring Him the best of our life, the best of our strength, the best of our days, of our skill, our brain, our belongings, and our powers. Isaac Watts puts it none too strongly when he says:

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Vol. XXXIV.—H

The Duty and Danger of Self-Consciousness

Exod. xxxiv. 29.—'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.'

Judges xvi. 20.—'Samson . . . wist not that the Lord was departed from him.'

MOSES wist not that the skin of his face shone while God talked with him: Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Some change has passed over both men; neither is conscious of the change, but while one is the better for the unconsciousness, the other suffers for it. Moses is not thinking of himself, and he is praised; Samson does not think about himself, and he is held up for reprobation. Why?

1. The first of these old Hebrew stories describes how Moses came down from communion with God upon Mount Sinai. There was a glow upon his face, and bystanders at once noted it. He was entirely unconscious of the difference of his countenance. The danger of being too self-conscious is one of the temptations which haunt only the better and the higher sides of human life. It is due, ultimately, to our position as human beings. We can not only think and act, but know that we think and act. The power of analysis and reflexion enables the mind to turn back upon itself, and it must do so if it is to mature. All progress involves the capacity for looking into the inner processes of our being, analysing our motives, scrutinizing our impressions, sifting our feelings, and the like. The religious life, especially, is helped by this faculty for introspection. Personal religion puts an edge upon our powers of thought, with its charge to consider, to pray, to take thought. Just as the value of our character depends not simply upon our actions but upon our motives, so the more conscientious a man becomes, the more he is apt to think of himself and to examine scrupulously his inward feelings and desires in religion. The first word Jesus ever spoke about prayer was, 'When thou hast shut thy door, pray'; and the heart of personal religion lies in that secret dealing with God alone and apart. But that very duty lays us open to the temptation of resting upon our emotions and being imprisoned in the circle of our ideas and experiences until any fresh and healthy influence may die out of life.

There are two kinds of people who are specially exposed to this danger.

There are those who are honestly worried about keeping up their religious life, as if that depended only and mainly upon what they feel and know; for that state of mind has something strained about it, and the element of strain proves that it is unnatural. The work of faith is to lead the soul up to God and leave it in His presence, resting upon the great realities of His favour and faithfulness; and religious life and aspiration is summed up by the Psalmist: 'My soul followeth hard after thee'—many people stop there; but the Psalmist adds, and how can it follow unless you can add—'Thy right hand sustaineth me?'

¶ Writing towards the close of his life, Richard Baxter makes this significant confession. 'I was once,' he says, 'wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell all at home, and look little higher; I was always poring either on my sins or wants, or examining my sincerity; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart-acquaintance and employment, yet I see more need of a higher work; and that I should look oftener upon Christ, and God, and heaven, than upon my own heart. At home I can find many distempers to trouble me, and some evidences of my peace, but it is above that I must find matter of delight and joy and love and peace itself. Therefore, I would have one thought at home upon myself and sins, and many thoughts above upon the high and amiable and beautifying things.'

And then there are those who are more occupied with their own attainments and experiences than with the God who produces them. Instead of rejoicing in God, some people keep their eye upon themselves. As Jonathan Edwards once put it in his classical book upon the religious affections: 'Having received what they call spiritual experiences and discoveries, their minds are taken up about them, admiring their own experiences. What they are principally elevated with is not the glory of God or the beauty of Christ, but the beauty of their experiences. They put their experiences in the place of Christ, and His beauty and fulness.' Well, that absorption in themselves leads to unhealthiness of faith. The religious life is thrown off its proper balance; and that is one reason why, in such phases of religion, there are violent oscillations between assurance

on the one hand, and blank despair on the other.

This nervous fingering of motives and feelings is a bad thing. The ideal is a radiant life which is unconscious of itself, because it is engrossed in the near duties which God has appointed for it, and in which God is, after all, best revealed to us. Moses wist not the skin of his face shone because God had talked with him. He came down from that mountain thinking only of the work God had set before him and how best to perform it. The man was absolutely natural in his religion. He acted spontaneously, without a strain of self-consciousness, and that was why people were impressed by him, by the absence of pose, the sense of duty before him.

¶ When Livingstone came back from Africa, after spending years there for his beloved Africans, some one asked him about his soul. 'My soul, my soul, I almost forgot I had a soul,' replied Livingstone. He was so interested and absorbed in other people's souls that he had almost forgotten about his own soul.

The story of the radiance upon the face of Moses may remind us profitably that to forget ourselves is often the most effective way of impressing others. Moses went up to the mountain with a burdened mind, the thought of his nation lying on his heart, and following him even in his moments of devotion. It was for their sake he prayed. He came down with a fresh zeal and insight to that people, but in the noble simplicity of his nature he was unconscious of how radiant and impressive his personality had become. He was not thinking about impressiveness, or popularity; what occupied him was a sheer sense of duty to God and man. He wist not that the skin of his face shone.

2. But all this must be qualified by another counsel. There is a duty no less than a danger of self-consciousness in religion. The mischief of being unduly careless about one's inner life is outlined in the story of Samson. There are always people like Samson in the world—happy, frank, good-natured men and women, who are not much given to sitting down and thinking about their souls. If they think about religion, as they grow up, they generally imagine, like Samson, that grace once given remains. They are not conscious of any deliberate break with the Church and the faith of their fathers, and so they take these for granted as still there.

People can very easily bring themselves to believe that what they once were they still are, especially if there has been no swerve or outburst of misconduct to mark the change that has been going on. And yet a change has been, in many cases, passing over their life. Associations and practices which once they would have scrupulously avoided are now admitted upon the score of business, or of legitimate pleasure, or of a larger knowledge of the world. This goes on almost insensibly. For lack of honest and thorough self-examination, the inward life fades away to little more than a memory. The process goes on unsuspected. In the morning Samson arose and said: 'I will go out as at other times before and shake myself.' And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

¶ The great Kutab Minar, near Delhi, that massive Tower of Victory and place of call to prayer, was badly shaken some years ago by an earthquake, and a crack appeared. There are fears that this crack is widening and extending, and that the stability of the whole magnificent column may be endangered. The structure is carefully examined by the authorities from time to time. So gradual and almost imperceptible is the destroying movement that it would escape all detection by the naked eye. And so what they have done is this. Small pieces of glass have been cemented here and there upon the stonework, with the date of their placing recorded; and if there is the slightest movement in the great mass it will be at once indicated through the cracking of these small and seemingly insignificant fragments of glass.¹

In our modern life there is little enough to send us back now and again to see how we fare in the inward part, and how we really stand to the moral and spiritual principles which we still profess to hold. The activities, as well as the amusements of the day, carry us off from the centre of the religious life—a definite, personal dealing with God; and unless we are watchful the endless distraction, even of the religious world, will evaporate sooner or later the strength of our very souls. Nothing will preserve us except what Moses practised and Samson neglected—the habit of direct intercourse with God, the Searcher of the soul. That will let light in upon any growing habit of selfishness; it will help us to see more clearly where we stand, put us upon our guard against the inroads

¹ Hubert L. Simpson.

of temptation; and, after all, the truest service we can render to others is through our personal character. The time taken by the conscientious man for worship and prayer is never wasted. In those pauses for quiet and serious communion, when he brings his conscience and conduct before the scrutiny of his Lord, he is enriching his own life and really adding to his powers of influence.

It depends very much upon our personal temperament whether we require to be warned against thinking too much, or thinking too little, about our souls. Probably more people need to remember themselves than to forget themselves. At certain periods, it is true, the danger is introspection, and against that morbid preoccupation with ourselves the story of Moses speaks to us of how vital religion means looking away to God, allowing God to absorb the mind and the heart. It is our faith in God, not our feelings about God, that really count. And yet, to begin with, self-knowledge is our most pressing duty. We must learn to take time for thought and prayer, above all for that prayer: 'Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' It is so easy to let things slip, and to shirk the trouble of examining our real motives, just as Samson did. Let the pathos of his story speak to us to-day across the centuries. 'He wist not that the Lord was departed from him'—he did not know; but he might have known, and he should have known. We can see him standing there in the fresh hour of the dawn, looking out over the familiar landscape. When the mists lifted from the plain, the shadows passed away, and he saw the cornfields; he saw the coming of the dawn, but he did not see the rolling up of the night that was blotting out the days of purity that held him to God. He did not see the coming on of the night upon his own soul. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

The Reflection of the Eternal Beauty

Exod. xxxiv. 29.—'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.'

1. WHEN Moses came down from the mount of vision on which he had communed with God,

his countenance was full of a heavenly light which greatly impressed the people. But he himself was unaware of the fact. This is a profoundly suggestive circumstance. It reminds us that the spiritual life—the life of those who are in constant communion with God—possesses a certain luminous quality which impresses itself upon the minds of those who behold it.

There are at least three elements in this spiritual beauty.

(1) There is *the beauty of holiness*. The shining face of spiritual purity is one of the unchallengeable facts of the religious life. In all ages there are Christian men and women whose character is marked by a singular beauty. Their religion is a thing of power which transfigures their whole life. And this is true not only of those who stand in the front rank of the followers of Christ. It is true also of multitudes of people of whom the world hears little, who live obscure and uneventful lives, and whose doings are never chronicled. They, too, unconsciously wear the aureole of saintliness, because they live in more or less constant fellowship with their God.

¶ ‘The only way,’ writes Rufus Jones, ‘of uttering your faith is by a heightened life and a radiant personality. There are multitudes of men and women now living, often in out-of-the-way places, remote hamlets, or uneventful farms, who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I have personally known,’ he adds, ‘many such lives, to one of whom only I shall refer. He never once swung out of his ordinary orbit. There were no flights of fancy, no spurts of enthusiasm, no uprushes of genius; the entire life was a plain, steady, straightforward march through the daily routine of commonplace duties. And yet—yet it was one of the noblest lives I have ever known. There was at the heart of the man a religious passion that throbbed in everything he did. He never bothered to think his religion out. But nobody ever hoed a row of potatoes with him, or pitched a load of hay, without discovering his religion.’

The poet is not entirely accurate in affirming that

There's no art

To find the mind's construction in the face.

The human countenance is often a more or less reliable index of character. The history of the soul, for those who have eyes to decipher its characters, can sometimes be read on the face.

Envy, greed, vanity, hatred, lust, leave on it their own distinctive impress, while goodness, on the other hand, has its own unmistakable image and superscription. The Christian life accordingly shines with the radiance of purity, and it is for that reason, among others, that the followers of Christ are called ‘the light of the world.’

¶ After Robert Murray McCheyne died a letter was found in his post-box. The letter was from a stranger who had heard him preach. The letter said: ‘I heard you preach last Sabbath evening and it pleased God to bless that sermon to my soul. It was not so much what you said, or your manner of speaking that struck me. I saw in you a beauty of holiness that I never saw before.’

(2) There is *the radiance of happiness*. When a man is really happy his face shines; the gladness of his heart is reflected in various ways in his outward appearance. The good life means happiness; not, indeed, unbroken happiness, which is seldom attained this side the grave, but a settled condition of soul which has happiness for its prevailing quality. A Christian is one who has been anointed in some measure with the oil of gladness. He has received the Spirit of Christ, and among the outstanding fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace. He has experienced the happiness of deliverance, in relation to his past; he also knows the happiness of possession, as regards his present; and he tastes, further, of the happiness of a good hope through grace, with reference to his future. And because of that forward look his face catches a little of the radiance of the glory that is awaiting him beyond the grave.

¶ Margaret Prescott Montague, in an article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, tells the story of an old Negro who had been very ill and unexpectedly got well. Somebody asked him how he got well. ‘Why,’ said he, ‘that doctor he came along, and he just give me some medicine, and it went through my whole personality!’

(3) There is *the radiance of enthusiasm*. There are few things that light up the soul like the flame of a noble purpose. Radiance is indeed the native hue of a lofty resolution. The call of duty summons a man to hardship and danger and self-sacrifice, but when he has an inward sense of vocation, and receives a vision of the splendour of the accomplished task, his face glows with the joy which a brave man

feels in matching his strength with a great undertaking.

¶ Here is how a poet describes the setting out of a young soldier in the last war.

He's gone.
I do not understand ;
I only know
That as he turned to go
And waved his hand,
In his young eyes a sudden glory shone,
And I was dazzled with a sunset glow,
And he was gone.

In the Christian life there is the transfiguring influence of the noblest of all enthusiasms. For the believer is called not only to salvation, but to service. He has seen the glory of the Kingdom of God, and his energies are dedicated to its interests. He is, therefore, a man with a definite purpose, a crusader whose heart is aflame with zeal for a Cause and with devotion to a Leader. We can readily believe that when the first disciples went out from the Council in Jerusalem, after having been beaten and forbidden to preach any more in the Name of Jesus, their faces would have reflected the rejoicing which filled their hearts at being counted worthy to suffer for His sake. And many a time since then the faces of Christ's servants have shone with the glow of a similar devotion. They may be called to the path of self-denial and the Cross, but for the sake of the Name they answer the call of the hard way with a courage that stamps its radiance on their very face. It was in such circumstances that the countenance of Stephen shone in that hour of unclouded vision when 'God's glory smote him on the face.'

2. Spiritual beauty is doubly attractive because it is unself-conscious. There is in it no sense of pride, no trace of ostentation. Those who advance farthest in the Christian life are of all people most conscious of their own shortcomings. They admire the radiance on the face of their fellow-believers, but they do not see their own.

¶ When Christiana and her children were in the house of the Interpreter they received many favours. Among other things, they were clothed with white raiment, and when thus adorned they were a source of wonderment one to another. 'They could not see that glory each one in her-

self which they could see in each other.' They began to esteem each other better than themselves. 'You are fairer than I am,' said one. 'You are more comely than I,' said another.

There are good reasons why the Christian should be unconscious of his own radiance. For one thing, he knows his own heart, and finds plagues enough there to keep him humble all the days of his life. For another thing, he measures himself by a lofty standard. It is not the judgment of the world, nor is it even the attainments of his fellow-Christians, that he adopts as his criterion of discipleship, but the ideal which is embodied in the holy and perfect Law of God. And when the purity of that Law flames into the inmost recesses of his heart, it brings to light many a secret blemish which causes him to bow his head in shame. And, above all, he has had a vision of the perfect beauty which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. 'Woe is me,' he feels constrained to cry . . . 'for I am a man of unclean lips.'

3. The secret of this beauty is not far to seek. The face of Moses shone because he had been in fellowship with God. During these forty days he had been bathed in the light of the Divine presence, and some of the brightness of that light clung to him when he descended from the Mount and mingled with his fellows on the plain below. And this is always the final secret of spiritual beauty. It is the people who walk in the light of fellowship with God that reflect the radiance on which their souls have looked. 'Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,' they 'are changed.'

¶ It is related of Michelangelo that when he had finished his famous statue of David, many of his friends who had not seen him when he was occupied with his task declared that he was greatly changed ; his very face was different. And when they looked at the statue and then at the sculptor they learned the secret of the transformation. They saw that he had carved his conception of David not only into the white stone but also, all unconsciously, into his own face.

This beauty has also the power to create beauty in other lives. It excites the admiration of those who behold it, and lifts their thoughts to higher things. Souls that have been stained with sin are transformed by its purity, hearts that have grown hard are melted by its glow.

According to the ancient legend, the presence of the goddess of Thebes was only known by the beauty she left behind. If she stood before a tree that had been blasted by lightning, it became covered with beautiful vines. If she sat upon a decaying log, the decay was lost to view under soft green moss. If she walked by the muddy banks of a river, violets sprang up in her path. So is it always with those in whom the beauty of the Lord is seen. Shining through their lives, it sheds beauty all around.

It is a notable fact that the Psalm which speaks most clearly about the transitory nature of all earthly things ends with the prayer: 'Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.' The writer tells us that the generations of men rise and pass away; that the days of our years are three-score years and ten; that a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night. And then, suddenly lifting up his eyes from this passing world, he catches a glimpse of the face of the eternal God, and prays that the beauty of the Lord which abides for ever may be upon him.

The prayer of the Psalmist is the prayer upon the lips of all who walk along the Christian way. They are the followers of Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. More and more do they desire that the beauty of the Lord may be upon them, not only because it is in itself so precious a gift, but also in order that this Divine imperishable beauty, shining through their lives, may draw others to Christ and to God.

That with the glory of so goodly sight
The hearts of men, which fondly here admire
Fair seeming shows, and feed on vain delight,
Transported with celestial desire
Of those fair forms, may lift themselves up
higher,
And learn to love, with zealous humble duty,
Th' eternal Fountain of that heavenly Beauty.

The Lost Radiance

Exod. xxxiv. 29.—'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.'

WHEN we go back to the headwaters of our faith in the first century, what is it that explains the great stream of the ages we call Christianity?

Not the formation of a creed, not the foundation of a new ecclesiastical system—that has come out of the stream, it did not make the stream—not a ritual that everybody must use, not even a Book, for great as the Book is, it, too, came out of the stream, and not the stream out of the Book. When we go back to the headwaters of our faith we find a unique Person, the most complete revelation of God that our world has ever seen, the most perfect expression of human nature that history can record.

The most remarkable thing about Christianity, at its birth, was a way of life, not a system. We go back and find a religion that is essentially spiritual. It sets man's spirit free, it brings faith and vision to live by, it makes life a thrilling adventure. Everybody noticed the radiance on the faces of those first Christians. They saw that something had happened which made them different from everybody else in the world—a new level of life.

1. Some years ago Dr. L. P. Jacks published his *Essex Hall Lecture*—one of the most beautiful things he has written—entitled 'The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion.' It has regretfully to be admitted that for a great many Christians that radiance is still lost. Too often they fail to live with joy, and thrill, and radiance on their faces. Too many persons to-day are over-busy speculating and arguing; they have very little time to restore their soul and get back to the deep-lying springs of life that set men and women free. Chesterton has hit off this tendency in a little poem:

Step softly under snow and rain
To find a place where men can pray,
The way is all so very plain
That we may lose the way.
O, we have learned to peer and pore
O'er tortured puzzles from our youth,
We know the labyrinthine lore,
We are the three wise men of yore,
And we know all things—but the truth.

And that is the trouble. The most effective Christian method is not argument. The greatest things in the world are not reached by argument. They come from experience. They come like the vernal equinox or radiance from the sun in spring, and there is no longer any need of argument; you are in the presence of the immutable

facts of life, and you do not argue because you know!

The moment Christianity becomes thoroughly alive at its heart it always has a way of doing miraculous things. It brings prodigals home. It raises life out of death. It turns sunsets to sunrises. It makes lame men walk and blind men see. It was that made Helen Keller the glorious woman she is. If we are to bring religion back into vital dominion over men's lives in the world to-day, it will not be because we know how to be very clever in argument. There is a counter-argument for every argument we can frame. The only glowing refutation of the materialism of our time, of our secular spirit, our atheism and paganism, is a personal life that demonstrates a new power to live by. We must become experts in the interpretation of life rather than clever theorists.

We have hardly begun to reach the full significance of Christianity. We have been too busy with the periphery and not with the centre of our faith. The old infallibilities are all dead, and there is not anybody living who can resurrect them. They must be replaced not by new infallibilities, because there will not be any, but by fresh discoveries of God and by the living testimony of the soul. Religion is not a theory, it is an experience, a life. George Macdonald's poem on the little child expresses almost exactly what happens to us always when we let the deeper spiritual forces have their full play in our lives:

I am a little child, and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze into the starry sky,
And then I cannot speak.
For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
The infinite of God.

We should lose our conviction of the outside world here if we lost our sense-contacts with it. Imagine what would happen to us if we lost all our sense-contacts, if our eyes never saw anything or our ears heard or our fingers felt. It would not be long before the outside world would fade away and be a myth or dream. It is very much so with the reality of God. We cannot keep it vivid and vital if our conviction of the reality of God rests solely on the testimony

of ancient books and documents. Imagine what it would be like if none of us had ever seen or could see sunrise or sunset, and all we knew about them was what we could find from Syrian tablets and Egyptian papyri. Well, if we expect to have religion dynamic, then God must possess us through faith that is born of first-hand experience.

¶ It sometimes happens that one goes to see a cathedral which is famous for the splendour of its glass; only to discover that, seen from outside, the windows give us no hint whatever of that which awaits us within. They all look alike, dull, thick, grubby. From this point of view we already realize that they are ancient, important, the proper objects of reverence and study. But we cannot conceive that solemn coloured mystery, that richness of beauty and meaning, which is poured through them upon those who are inside the shrine. Then we open the door and go inside. We leave the outer world and enter the inner world; and at once we are surrounded by a radiance, a beauty, that lie beyond the fringe of speech.¹

2. The highest moments of life are those occasions when the individual soul feels aware of mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God and with the environment in which it lives. We feel a call to our Divine fatherland. A vivid story in the Book of Kings tells how a young prince of Edom had to flee to Egypt to escape the ruthless slaughter of Joab, and there he prospered and became a prince in Egypt, but when he heard that his old enemy had gone to his eternal judgment he came to Pharaoh and asked that he might go back to Edom. Pharaoh asked, 'Why, what hast thou lacked?' 'I have lacked nothing,' he replied, 'howbeit let me go back to my own country.' That 'howbeit' means everything. There is a mysterious pull of the soul that takes us toward our fatherland, and no matter how much we enjoy the secular world, 'howbeit let me go back to the real country.' 'I will arise and go to my Father'—that is one of the greatest words in the world. I want to be at home.

The sun rises bright in France,
And fair sets he;
But he has tint the blythe blink he had
In my ain countrie.

¹ Evelyn Underhill.

It is not a peaceful heaven we are talking about. It is not another land at all, but another level of life. It is right here in the midst of life, and there are moments when we are aware of it, when we have mutual and reciprocal correspondence with this reality, when we have a palpitating sense that the human and the Divine have come together and have found one another. When this happens we feel completely refreshed as by God's own breath. We feel that we have found something which makes us able to stand anything that can happen to us in the universe. It is as though eternity had broken into time. 'The whole creation had a new smell,' was the way George Fox put it.

This experience is much more common than most of us realize. This is no rare or accidental possibility. There are persons all about us who 'wist not that their faces shine.' In any town or village in the world you will find such persons.

3. But how does this kind of experience affect one's social tasks? It has often been assumed that a mystical experience, a discovery of God, acts as a kind of intoxication and carries the person into a comfortable quietism. 'God's in His heaven, All's right with the world.' You have to have a mighty experience to say that all's right with the world nowadays. It has been supposed by a good many persons that a mystical experience is an end in itself. A person finds God, and that is the terminus *ad finem*, and 'let the old world stew in its juice.'

Just opposite to that is the normal effect of finding God. The great mystics come back from the high mountains with an imperative sense of mission for the world. Isaiah's seraphim is a perfect symbol of the right attitude. He had six wings, and with twain he covered his face—reverence, with twain he covered his feet—humility, and with twain he did fly—activity. And Isaiah when he saw it said, 'Here am I; send me.'

Meister Eckhart, the great mystic of the fourteenth century, used to rank Martha above Mary. Martha stands for activity, Mary for meditation. Martha was preparing a splendid meal which nobody wanted. And here is Mary with rapture and vision, but doing nothing with it. What we need is to get these two halves together in a single life.

¶ Phillips Brooks tells the story of a missionary who was on furlough from Africa and

wanted to take back with him something to please the natives. He chose a sundial, and explained it to them. And they were so filled with amazement that they built a roof over it to protect it from the sun! Many people do that with their religion, housing it in, not allowing politics, business, or household affairs to touch it.

We want both aspects of life united. Conviction and depths and serenity and radiance help to make a tremendously effective organ of creative work.¹

Giving to the Church

Exod. xxxv. 21.—'And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering to the work of the tabernacle.'

THESE last few years will be memorable not only for their shining record of heroism and unprecedented endurance by all classes, but also for the marvellously open-hearted giving to all good causes that has characterized them. In the presence of such generosity as has financed the Red Cross and all other agencies of ministry to our fighting men and their dependents, he would be dull of soul indeed who could not recognize the munificence of the Divine expressing itself in human nature. The generosity of God has dropped a seed in our hearts; it is our prayer that it may take permanent root and bear an hundred-fold.

Three fundamental principles can be discerned governing and prompting that miracle of generosity both of money and of service.

1. The first principle that any one who looks at the facts can learn from the war charities is that the object for which we are asked to give *must appeal to the heart*. What does not touch the heart touches neither the strings of the purse nor the springs of service. To relieve, feed, clothe, comfort, heal those brave lads of ours makes our hearts to glow within us, and money and service are unstintedly given. The heart is in the gift. He who gives little does so because he has no chord in his heart to be touched by the appeal of the collector. To

¹ Rufus M. Jones, in *The Christian World Pulpit*, cxxvii 133.

produce good giving we must have two things brought together ; (1) an object of charity that the heart loves, and (2) hearts capable of responding to its appeal. Now giving to the Church depends, first, on whether the Church of Christ is really enshrined in our hearts' affection, and second, on whether we have hearts as responsive to its appeal and claim as they should be. In this country at least we do love the Church, but how our hearts respond to her claim and appeal is another matter. Thrilling as we do to the story of our Church's past glory, the day has come when we must ensure her future glory by our ungrudging support and unstinted service.

¶ Our children were brought up in the atmosphere of a mission church. Our second little son, saying his prayers (at a time when there was a famine in India), made this petition : " Please, God, when all the children in India have got enough to eat, and when all the children in Broomielaw have got shoes and stockings, may I keep my next penny to buy an engine ? " That same boy, when he was a young officer in India, used to send out of his pay five pounds to the minister of St. Mark's Church every Christmas, " to help to give a good time to the Broomielaw people." (We learned of this only after he had gone from us in the last war.)¹

2. Secondly, an object of charity *must appeal to our intelligence*. War charities succeed because the people understand clearly and deeply what the work is that they are asked to support. If the Church finds difficulty in stirring enthusiastic lavish support, it is because we have not grasped the magnitude and necessity of her work. She fights for the eradication of sin from the human heart, she builds to construct Christ-like righteousness on earth, and she gives men a faith to live by. That is the task of the Church, given to her under God's seal. Does it not appeal to our intelligence as an infinitely high and holy and necessary work, to be supported and carried on by all who have a hope for the race ? Is there any other institution or society that stands for the rooting out from amongst us of all evil, root, stock, and branch, and refuses to be content with less than making life Christ-like ? Yet it is the institution which the world supports with least zeal and thoroughness. She is the only big institu-

tion in the world which to-day any man supports with a penny. Give to the Red Cross as we do to the Church, and see what the Red Cross will be—a cripple. And the fault lies in our intelligence. What the Red Cross man aims at we can readily grasp and understand. But the aim of our Church is bigger than our comprehension of it ; and it is not material that we can measure its value, but spiritual. What we need is a clear insight into how much the Church means for the world of to-day, and a vivid vision of her great objective for the world of the distant to-morrow. Then, feeling that we are participants and co-partners with God in the greatest task ever confided to man, we shall give of our best up to the limit of our ability, and not merely the least that will be acceptable.

3. Thirdly, all charities *must appeal to the conscience*. It is not enough to touch the heart and gain the understanding. To help must be a matter of conscience. The lesson of the war is that to give or to serve is not merely a generous thing for generous people to do, but a duty to be refused by none who would keep his conscience clear.

The war has brought to us all without exception the duty and privilege of giving to all good causes. Conscience now says, ' It is my duty to give. I cannot leave it to others. I too must serve.' Now if ever there was a cause fitted to appeal to the conscience it is the cause of the Church of Christ. For it is God who lays upon us the duty. It is His work we are called upon to support, furnish, equip, and carry on. It is directly God's work. How are we doing it ? Do we listen to conscience at all in this matter, and do we really recognize that it is God's work and nothing else ? Must we not admit that the fact is either forgotten or ignored that what is given to the Church in money or in service is given to God for God's work ? If that be not so then we have to explain how it is that the contribution to the Church is the first thing to diminish in adversity and the last to increase in prosperity, and in addition the general fact that few can say that what is given to the Church is a real sacrifice. The Church of Christ is not equipped either in men or in money for her great task of to-morrow—the task of imposing the pure spirit of Jesus Christ as the ideal on the new world that is to be. Doubtless we still have the fine old Covenanters who will fight and

¹ Lilian Adam Smith, *George Adam Smith*, 67.

die for her. But what we need is the new Covenanter who will live for her, work for her, think for her, and give for her of his best.

I love Thy Church, O God ;
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Ennobling the Commonplace

Exod. xxxv. 30, 31.—'The Lord hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; And he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.'

1. FEW of us are called to great positions in life, to move and have our being in the limelight of publicity; our vocation is the humdrum routine of commonplace duties. The problem is to find the secret of the ennoblement of the commonplace, how to regard the little next-to-nothings in which we spend our working days as in any sense related to the great purposes of the eternal.

There is a conception of religion which finds its expression in the repudiation of this world with all its duties and obligations. It deliberately seeks to withdraw from the daily round and common task to a life of introspection and contemplation, enjoying the raptures of the soul which do not prompt to any useful service. This conception of religion has sometimes been grafted on to the Christian faith, but it is entirely foreign to it. It is to be rejected as the denial of the teaching of Jesus Christ. True religion is a way of life; it is the fine art of holy living; it may be practised in all places under all conditions. The ordinary affairs of life are the only means given to us in which to glorify God.

For the greater part of His life Jesus lived as a working man; He was apprenticed in a joiner's yard, and, it may be inferred, became on Joseph's death the breadwinner for a household of at least eight persons. For the greater part of His life, the body of Christ was exercised

in the common processes of industry. But into that ordinary life He put His goodness and passion for righteousness. He went on weaving His faith and loyalty and kindliness in the stuff of the common things we have to handle; those things which become so tangled, twisted, and broken in our hands. But in His hands they were kept whole, bright, and pure, and work, play, fellowship were to Him the raw material out of which to fashion the noblest living.

¶ Mr. Alexander Irvine, in an article in *The Teacher's World*, relates how a speaker at a dinner to a hundred and fifty graduates criticized education by taking up one thing after another—the table-cloth, pottery, carpets, rugs, and so on—and showing the labour which each entailed. Not a person in the room, he said, could produce one of them. They were not taught to create with their hands, were even taught to consider themselves superior to those who did.

'I want to point out to you that the highest form of culture and refinement known to mankind was ultimately associated with tools and labour. In order to do that I must present to you a picture, imaginative, but in accord with the facts of history and experience.'

He pushed his chair back, and stood a few feet from the table. His face betrayed deep emotion. His voice became wonderfully soft and irresistibly appealing. The college men had been interested; they were now spellbound. He raised his hand, and went through the motions of drawing aside a curtain.

'Gentlemen,' he said, 'may I introduce to you a young Galilean who is a master builder—Jesus of Nazareth!'

It was a weird act. The silence became oppressive. As if addressing an actual person of flesh and blood, he continued: 'Master, may I ask you, as I asked these young men, whether there is anything in this room that you could make with your hands as other men make them?'

There was a pause for a brief moment or two, then with the slow, measured stride of an Oriental he went to the end of the table, and took the table-cloth in his hand, and made bare the corner and carved oak legs of the great table. In that position he looked into the faces of the men and said: 'The Master says, "Yes, I could make the table—I am a Carpenter!"'

2. Those who seek to live the better life will soon discover that it cannot be lived in human strength alone. We shall never lift our tasks to the higher level unless we bear them up in His power. When Jesus said to the disciples, 'Without me ye can do nothing,' He was stating a fact of experience. Like the man described in the text we need to be filled with the spirit of God. Bezaleel was filled with the spirit of God for workmanship. He was a master-craftsman and for him and those who worked with him in the building of the Tabernacle there was the same need. No good work is done except in the spirit of God. We do not honour the Master by assuming that He is only concerned in the important acts of our history.

¶ It was a true perception that enabled John Knott, the minister of the little church at Eythorne, to describe himself upon the charge sheet as 'A blacksmith, by the grace of God.' Whatever our vocation, we need the Divine Spirit.

In a great war, as in every important enterprise, there are different spheres of service. They cannot be compared; they are equal in importance though totally different in the demands they make. There are two ends to the line of communications in war: one is the base, the other is the battle; each demands loyal service, and the spirit in which that service is rendered is the test of bravery.

Without belittling our fighting men, we may question whether it is not easier to be heroic on the field of battle than amid the ordinary duties of the day. Wonderfully brave things have been achieved by men and women who never saw the battle-front. Mothers have carried the load of anxiety with a laugh; and widows have borne unutterable grief with a smile. They have acted in the spirit of the old man who, when he learned that his two sons were killed in action, turned to his wife and simply said: 'Now, Mother, we must show where they got their pluck.'

We all need heartening these days; the strain is immense for every one. No position is free from the added burden war has laid upon our country. As we bear our part bravely, there need be no question of first or last; it is not for the servants of God to choose their work, but to do it in the spirit of their Master, in the place to which He calls them; and at the end of the fight we may all rejoice together in a task

well done. The Source of our strength is in the Divine Spirit. We need for all manner of workmanship the same great gift that this man Bezaleel received in the old time.

Bezaleel the Artist

Exod. xxxvii. 1-7.—'Bezaleel made the ark of acacia wood: . . . And he made two cherubim of gold' (R.V.).

THE ark, which this passage describes, was a small chest constructed for the keeping of the most sacred national relics; and its lid, on which blood was sprinkled once a year, was the mercy-seat, the peculiar point of God's presence and approach to Israel. It was natural that this holiest part of the furniture of her worship should also be the masterpiece of her art. It was constructed of acacia wood, a hard and close-grained kind of timber, orange-brown in colour, which grew freely in the desert. It measured four and a half feet in length, and three feet in depth and height, and it was wholly overlaid with gold. Rising out of the lid, and of one piece with its golden covering, were two figures of cherubim, also of pure beaten gold. These figures stood one at either end of the slab, and the wings of each spread forward towards the wing-tips of the other, while their faces looked down in perpetual gaze upon the centre of the mercy-seat. Besides these, the only decorative work upon the ark was a moulding that ran round its upper edge. The man who made it was one Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, a man of whom it is recorded that the Lord had called him by name, and had filled him with the spirit of God, 'in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work.'

1. The man Bezaleel, as Israel thought of him, is one of those great pathetic figures of the ancient days whose story touches deep chords in the heart of many in succeeding generations. To most Israelites, the Second Commandment would mean nothing more than the prohibition of idolatrous symbols which they would have

found more or less tempting. To one who had learned art in Egypt, loved it and chosen it for his life-work, the Commandment must have sounded like a death-warrant. Doubtless he had spent many a laborious hour in mastering his craft, while dreams and ambitions floated before his imagination. Countless failures had led but to new efforts and more courageous pursuit of the perfection that ever receded before his advance. No doubt artistic Egypt had her new theories and experimental departures, luring on such men to test them, and giving to their life its intellectual zest. And all that is over. The keen excitement and 'the glory of going on' are suddenly arrested, and the man has ceased to live as he had counted living. Behind him there is but the memory of a dream; before him a new career—the career not of an artist but an artisan. It would be difficult to imagine a more exquisitely painful tragedy, or a more irresistible temptation to rebellion.

Yet once more—'once, and only once, and for One only'—he is permitted to do his best. The two statues were to be the last human forms that a Hebrew would portray for centuries. We can see Bezaleel planning and sketching, modelling and remodelling, as if he grudged each step that brought him nearer to the end of such labours. We are told that 'when Gibbon had finished his *Decline and Fall*, he had only a few moments of joy, and it was with a melancholy spirit that he parted from his labours.' So this man had to leave his work, while his fingers were aching to carry it on. He had to leave it, and let it go into a darkness where even his own eyes would never see it again. Doubtless the workmanship was not perfect. A later Greek might have improved upon it, and he himself must have thought of finer touches here and there, and longed for the chance of them with all an artist's dissatisfaction and desire. Yet he must leave it, and descend to plainer and more insignificant work. While his fellows in Egypt were pressing forward toward perfection, he must stay behind, with hands idle from the highest tasks.

And yet—he had left it in the Holy Place of God. We can picture him kneeling in his tent of an evening, wearied by the day's work among the limited and monotonous designs for the decoration of rich men's tents. As he knelt down his heart was hot and sore within him,

and the artist's longing had almost made him a rebel. Then once more he would offer it to God, his life's great sacrifice, and so the night would bring consolation and his spirit find at least a sombre peace.

2. Among us there are many who know only too well what all this means. They had found a vocation from God, offering them the great opening and chance of their lives. Faculties stirred in them, tastes and ambitions were awakened, that pointed forward to a career which absorbed all the interest and meaning of their lives. It was their high calling—apparently their one opportunity—to rise above the artisan's to the artist's station. It may have been painting, or sculpture, or literature, or music. It may have been a profession—the ministry, the mission field, medicine, law, or teaching. It may have been a skilled trade. In any case, some fine and fascinating thing seemed to be given them to do, liberating their best powers.

Then something went wrong. Circumstances changed, means gave out, health broke down, or some dear companion of the way departed, so that they could no longer now find either opportunity or heart for the work they might have done. In the careers of many men there is some such experience as this; and, in ways more private and all the more bitter on that account, the story finds its parallel in the lives of very many women.

Yes, it is bitterly hard, and none can wonder if the spirit is tempted to anger and rebellion. Yet in these there is no consolation, and there is a better thing that may be done with a shattered ambition. There was a woman once who poured out upon the feet of Jesus her box of ointment of spikenard very precious. There was this man Bezaleel, who made his statues and left them in the Holy Place. So may we all leave our old ambitions there, in the Holy Place, at the feet of Jesus. Your changed career need not be but one more bit of wreckage left desolate on the strewn shore. Leave it as your life's sacrifice to God.

¶ One of the saddest stories of our time comes from the frustrated life of Winifred Holtby. Having given evidence that the spark of genius was in her mind, she came to the age of thirty-three, and all who knew her looked confidently forward to the place she would find in the story

of English literature. But at that age the doctor told her she had two years to live. At first she was bitter, terribly so. She went into the country and one morning climbed to a farm on a hill. Her friend, Vera Brittain, tells what happened. 'She found herself by a trough outside the farmyard, the water in it was frozen and a number of young lambs were struggling beside it vainly trying to drink. She broke the ice, and as she did so she heard a voice saying: "Having nothing, yet possessing all things." It was so distinct that she looked round, startled, but was alone with the lambs on the top of the hill. Suddenly, in a flash, the grief, the bitterness, the sense of frustration disappeared. . . .' From that moment she accepted graciously a situation which could not be altered.¹

3. The thought is of still wider application. It covers not our work only, but much else that is subtler and yet more poignant than the dearest art. There are those who find 'the artist's sorrow,' without gaining 'the man's joy' in compensation. In some measure all our intellectual and emotional and spiritual ambitions are sure to disappoint us. We slowly come to realize that much of what we have longed for in life we shall never attain. It matters not what outsiders think of our character, or how they envy our good fortune. We know better, and understand what it is to aim at a first, and reach but a second or a third. The inner life we lead, the thoughts and imaginations, the play of feeling, the level of work we find ourselves competent to do—none of these is what we thought it would be. Never shall we attain to that of which we dreamed. We do our best, and we have come to know that to the end it will be but second-rate.

So, in one way or another, life changes its aspect for every finely tempered spirit. Some of its earlier purposes are cut off; some of the finest service that was once required, is now withdrawn; some vistas of thought and feeling were open for an hour to mind and heart, and now they are closed for ever. Leave then that unfinished thing, that vanished hope and achievement broken off. All that you aspired to be, and are not, and never will be now—let that be your sacrifice. Offer it very reverently, and leave it with your God. Then go back to

¹ Alan Walker, *Everybody's Calvary*, 56.

the great world and the common task. Go back, not as a disappointed failure and a man deeply wronged by life, but as one of those whose finest art God has understood and valued and chosen for His Holy Place.

4. What the end of these things will be we know not, yet surely no such sacrifice is ever lost. And if that be true of lives that have seemingly missed their vocation, it is surely not less true of those that have prematurely passed away. Not even death itself can ultimately waste any precious thing. The reckless and indiscriminate destruction, which seems to set the most necessary and invaluable lives at the mercy of every chance and accident of nature, is appalling and mysterious indeed. Lives full of high promise, and hitherto faithful and constant to their task, are suddenly cut off. Much remained for them to do, when their tools fell from their hands and their eyes closed upon the light.

It is a problem full of mystery until a man goes into the house of the Lord, and sees the sacrifices before that shrine. That art can be no failure, that life cannot be wasted, which has been laid down upon the mercy-seat, though it may have to abide in darkness. There is a legend of the artificers who built one of Apollo's temples after his heart's desire, that the god rewarded them 'with the guerdon that is beyond all other recompense, a speedy and painless death.' If Greece in all her young gladness and her delight in the sunlit world was able to say such a thing, how much more may we, to whom the cross and grave of Jesus have brought life and immortality to light! Let us offer such sacrifices as art or life may call for, not sorrowfully, but with the brightness of a triumphant faith that nothing can be wasted which is left in the Holy Place of God, and that He will find work still more worth for those to do who have laid down their finest and their best before Him there.

God's House

Exod. xl. 17.—'And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.'

IN a forest cabin a few miles north of Oslo Eivind Berggrav is held as prisoner, with twelve

soldiers keeping guard. All Norway knows that he is there—the chief Bishop of the Norwegian Church—and that, however straitened his bodily movements may be, nothing can chain his free spirit. He is not allowed to see even his wife or his children. No one can approach him. No one can write to him about the affairs of Church or nation. Yet, in spite of such compulsory silence, his very captivity is eloquent. He is another symbol in the midst of darkness of the glory and the power of God, owing his imprisonment to his refusal to disobey the First Commandment, 'Thou shalt have none other gods before Me.'

Here is a story from Bishop Berggrav's own tale of his life in his first diocese, Halogaland, in the Far North, and of the building of a church.

There is a little old fishing village on an island called Makkaur. It has no beach or harbour, only rocks and cliffs. There are one hundred and two people all told in the little village. For generations the islanders had no church. But at last they built one for themselves. And it came about in this way. There was no earth in Makkaur. But about sixty years ago a fisherman named Hansen started carrying earth from the moors into Makkaur, a very little at a time. Then his wife, Peroline Hansen, joined him, and they went together by rowing-boat farther into the fiord and fetched load by load of earth, which they carried up the iron ladder on the cliffs, and gathered it together. After some years they had collected enough to feed one cow. The fisherman died, and his son and his wife went on in the same way till the field became large enough for two cows. But the old fisherman's wife decided that there must be a church. So she started quietly and cleared the ground beside the field, and one day she said to her son, 'Here the church shall stand.' For the rest of her life she worked on, determined that before her son died the church should be built. Gradually the little colony of Makkaur, men and women, raised the money—some of it was their own hard-won savings, some came from the school authorities, some from a school and church fund. In the end 6000 kroner was raised (about £300), and the little wooden church was built and finished by 1934. The Pastor at Vardoe, full of joy, wrote to Bishop Berggrav at Tromsø, inviting him to consecrate the building. The Bishop came and stayed with Peroline Hansen's son, Bern-

hard Hansen, himself a fisherman and now seventy years old. And thereafter the ceremony of consecration took place.¹

1. The children of Israel were on the march, living in tents, moving by irregular stages towards a promised land. In those dangerous and uncertain years the pilgrims discovered within their hearts the old, inherent need of the soul. They needed God. And their need of Him was no vague craving, to be satisfied by some indefinite emotion. They asked precise and definite things. They needed a visible sanctuary—a tent—a House of God. They knew that it was there that they must pray and worship. It was there that they expected answers from the living and hearing God; and those answers, at times, came so clearly that the only way they could set forth their experience was to say that in the Tent of Meeting God *spoke* with them. So real to them in that place was the Divine presence that they could image it as an encompassing cloud of glory.

Something there is in the very make of man's life that cannot rest in the common things of his pilgrimage. Ever and again life overwhelms him. Toil in its dull monotony, sorrow in its besetting ache, the dilemmas that disturb his mind, the problems, exhaustions, bewilderments of things envelop and penetrate him. He must have a way of escape. Some old power within him must be renewed; some new power vouchsafed. Time must feel eternity. Spirit must meet with that Spirit which is the Father of our spirits.

Man belongs to a spiritual universe: he is the child of an Infinite Spirit, God. He is God's own offspring, created in the image of God, the incarnation of God. Hence consciously or unconsciously, his spirit turns towards God as the flowers to the sun, as the magnetic needle to the pole, and his soul cries out for God. It may be like 'the cry of an infant crying in the night, an infant crying for the light, and with no language but a cry,' but evermore the cry for God comes up from the human heart. The religious instinct is the most powerful, persistent, and widely manifested of all the instincts of the race. Says Plutarch: 'You may find cities without walls, without schools, without markets, without theatres; but a city without a temple no man ever saw.'

¹ Eivind Berggrav, *With God in the Darkness*, 1.

2. Furthermore, man needs fellowship in worship. Moses worshipped God in the desert ; he stood before Him on Sinai till his face shone with the glory of the Most High. Yet Moses built the Tabernacle for daily worship and communion with God by the whole people. David wrote his great songs of devotion and worshipped God in every glory of earth and sea and sky. Yet David said he would rather have one day in God's House than a thousand elsewhere. Jesus worshipped His Father by lakeside and hillside, on the highway and the city street. He never drew a breath that was not worship to God. Yet He never broke His custom of worshipping in the synagogue and the Temple with others. On the Day of Pentecost the disciples were not at prayer in their homes or lodgings. They were 'all gathered with one accord in one place.' As Dr Samuel Johnson says : 'Our minds are more piously affected in places appropriated to Divine worship than in others.'

¶ There is a striking story told in a book entitled *The Parish Communion*, of a young Englishman who met while on his travels a monk from a monastery. The young fellow said his prayers, but he was astonished to see that the monk did not say his, and at last he asked him why he never knelt down to pray. 'Oh,' said the monk, 'you do not understand : I belong to a community, a community of praying people ; and so I do not need to pray myself.' That, of course, was quite wrong. But there was in that monk's mind the sense of belonging to a praying community, and that sense was so strong, that he felt himself to be one of that community, and he did not feel the need of praying himself.¹

Fifty or a hundred or more, or even two or three, gathered together, are more than the same number of isolated worshippers. There is the realization of the fact that we are not alone. There is the confirmation of our faith in the realization that others have found that faith too. There is the reinforcement that comes from the knowledge that the company with which we worship is but one of many companies throughout the world, part of that great multitude which St John saw, of all nations and kindreds and tongues, standing before the throne. There is the play of spirit upon spirit. There is the fellowship of a common quest and a common

purpose, in which each contributes to the receptiveness of the whole and the whole contributes to the receptiveness of each. There is nothing arbitrary about it. It is the simple fact that God has made us for fellowship in worship, as in everything else. And we are lifted to our highest, we are made capable of receiving the best and of achieving the best, in fellowship.¹

¶ Once in the night, in France, I heard a baby crying, and with that it came home to me that, behind all the babel of our varying tongues, the language of essential human need is the same everywhere. So, the world over, deep underneath the storms of faction and of differing views, all Christian folk have the same wants, and hold the same assurances, and find themselves met and surrounded by the same amazing grace of God. And surely that weight of corroborating evidence is not a little thing, but one that rightly makes one's own faith not just faith, but a conviction that is certainty.²

3. The Church is here to make men what they ought to be toward God and their neighbours. The Church is not an end in itself, it is only a means to a greater end, which is the regeneration of all society—the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Men blame the Church for being out of touch with modern life and its problems ; but that is only partly true ; and where it is true, the keenest criticism and the most strenuous denunciation come from the men who stand in her pulpits. Many who refuse to come to the Church profess to believe in Christianity and Christ. But what would they have known of either but for the Church which has preserved the one and preached the other all through the centuries ? In spite of all faults and failures, the Church has been the one great custodian and exponent of Christianity. She has been, and is, the great moral leader of the world. Everywhere she has set her foot in the name of her Lord darkness has been scattered, wrongs have been exposed, justice been established, and love and mercy have been published as the will of God for men. Institutions of love and sympathy and education have sprung up like flowers in her path ; and if civilization is still uncivilized and heathendom still heathen, it is simply because the best efforts and worthiest representations of the Church

¹ L. Pleased, in *The Christian World Pulpit*, cxxxiii. 96.

² A. J. Gossip.

¹ A. F. Winnington Ingram.

have been rejected by individuals and by nations.¹

4. Worship is profitable for the life that now is as well as that which is to come. It is the way to wholeness of life. Worshipping companies of men and women, companies ascribing supreme worth to God, seeking in fellowship enlightenment and vision and power, are the one bulwark of liberty, as has been proved in our own history. Divine worship is the one thing that produces the finest fruits in individual lives, and makes possible the greatest service of the Kingdom of God and of the needs of man. And the presence of each individual who seeks to enter into the meaning of worship, who seeks to renew the vision of God and to receive the spirit of God, the presence of each individual means an addition of untold value to the fellowship and to the Kingdom of God. Therefore, 'forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.' 'Offer yourselves as living sacrifices unto God : that is a service God can with good reason expect.'

Between Two Worlds

Exod. xl. 35.—Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.'

THE position in which Moses found himself was one which is common to most living and thinking men and women at some stage or at successive stages in their career. He found himself cut off from the tent of the people, and shut out from the tabernacle of the Lord.

It is at the moment when Moses has completed his inestimable social and spiritual service for his people that we are told of the strange plight which befell his own soul. There is a certain reserve about the statement, as there must always of necessity be about those deep things of the spirit which can never be fully expressed in words ; but there is a world of suggestion in them. 'So Moses finished the work,' we are told. 'Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.' He had done the work. Was this to be the reward—denied both human fellowship and Divine worship ?

¹ A. E. Cooke.

Loneliness is one of the penalties of greatness, whether it takes the form of the rank which raises a man above his fellows, or the demands of scholarship which cut him off from social amusements and intercourse, or the nature of the task which he cannot share with others, or the rigours of sainthood which erect an impassable barrier. But it seems as if the experience of Moses shadowed forth here was something different from that, something which is shared with him by those of us less richly endowed. Is there any one who has not felt something like disappointment at the finishing of what seemed in the doing of it to be a good and a beneficent piece of work ? Instead of that elation of spirit which we promised ourselves as the result of our effort and toil, there settles down a cloud of depression. The result of all our striving seems to have earned neither the gratitude of men nor the blessing of God. At the end of it all we feel disappointed and disillusioned, shut out alike from the easy-going fellowship of others, and, owing to a certain soilure of the spirit contracted through necessary walking in the muddy ways of controversy, farther away than ever from intimate communion with God.

Let us consider two aspects of this experience which are common enough to the majority of us, and then try to discover, if we can, some explanation of it.

1. Many thinking people reach, some time or other, a stage when something like a cloud rests for them on the tent of the congregation. Organized religion seems to be well enough for the generality of mankind ; but for them, with their young wits sharpened by contact with the philosophies and sciences of school and college and education generally, the place where others are wont to worship has no attraction for them. There is a hazy cloud of nebulous unrealities resting on the tent of the congregation ; and they do not find that it helps to call the dimness God nor its endurance faith. Such people cannot enter into the worship of the congregation. Yet neither have they, with all their study, been able to penetrate into that place where the clear white light of absolute truth prevails. They are in that condition described by Matthew Arnold in *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, lamenting the loss of the faith of youth, and unable to see what can take its place.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

Or it may be you have done your best, or at any rate not a negligible nothing, for the social and moral welfare of your fellow-men. And your application to social problems, or your efforts to win the way out to the land of promise, have but resulted in this—that you cannot find the old content and satisfaction in the tent of the congregation. And, on the other hand, whilst you have a place for the tabernacle among the ideals of mankind, it seems to have no place for you.

¶ The classical expression of this poignant condition is to be found in the *Notes* which were discovered among the papers of the distinguished biologist, George John Romanes, after his death. After confessing how he had felt compelled in the interests of truth as it then presented itself to him, 'to stifle all belief of the kind which I conceive to be the noblest, and to discipline my intellect with regard to this matter into an attitude of the purest scepticism,' he goes on: 'I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept to "work while it is day" will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that "the night cometh when no man can work," yet when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.'

2. But there is another phase of Moses' experience which is perhaps even commoner and more pertinent to the condition of some of us. Moses had done his best for God and man; not, it is true, without errors of judgment and faults of temper, but yet in a noble and self-denying spirit akin to that in which St Paul and Danton expressed their readiness to be accursed if only blessing might come to their nations. And the result of all his labour and his thought was that he seemed to have fallen between two

stools as we say. He had parted with the easy-going content of the majority, without gaining access to the inner shrine where the glory of God was manifest.

And sometimes that sense of frustration overwhelms one who has tried to live the higher life. Once Christ has had His hand on a man He spoils him for lower satisfactions. Such an one has made all through life an honest and earnest attempt to stand for something higher than the things that are seen, and to be a champion of God in the midst of the world's defections; and yet he has sorrowfully to admit that he does not possess that unruffled and inalienable assurance of God for which his soul craves.

Who has been exempt from this sense of failure? Who does not feel it sooner or later—perhaps, like Moses, in the moment when he has finished off some special effort, and pauses for a time and looks round to estimate his real and actual gain? When we think of what life might be, and the poor thing we have made of it; when we recall the splendid visions which once allured us of what might be accomplished by earnest effort, and then consider the meagre result and dissatisfied state in which we now find ourselves, we feel as if there were no guiding hand or God in life, no logical outcome of things. If life had been lived selfishly, with no other thought than that of personal satisfaction and material gain, we think that we would not have wondered at the plight in which we find ourselves. But so often it is those who have lived for others and sought to mould their life to high ends who feel shut out from both tent and tabernacle. They have espoused some cause, of the excellence of which they were thoroughly convinced, but its chariot-wheels drag heavily or roll backwards. They have set their hearts on reclaiming or helping some fellow-creature, and, notwithstanding all their self-denying efforts, they have a sickening sense of defeat. Their sacrifice of time and means seems often to have been misapplied, and their kindness shamefully abused. It was not for gratitude that Moses worked, much less for reward, but his confidence for the moment in human nature and even in Divine truth must have been shaken. He must have felt that there was little use in serving either God or man, when he could enter neither tabernacle nor tent.

Is there any explanation of this seeming failure? Well, the higher a man's idea of what

the world should be, the more likely is he to be depressed at times by the appearance of things around him, and by the painfully slow rate of progress which the cause of righteousness and truth seems to make. All who have tried to do any kind of good work must have had this experience, especially if they set out with high enthusiasm and great hopes. They cannot go back to the old content and indifference, let their hands hang down, and say, 'Well, what does it matter, anyway?' And they have not yet seen the glory of God or felt His presence in the degree for which they had hoped.

¶ 'It is impossible for me,' said Mr Baldwin, 'if I live to be the age of Methuselah, to see the things I am working for materialize. I have to work entirely by faith.'

Moses may have been qualified to do the work he did, and to be the inspiration to the world he has been, just because of the plight in which he found his own soul. He could not stay in the tent and he could not settle down in the tabernacle, just because he was fully conscious of both. He was neither so dazzled by the glory that he was insensible of the gloom, nor so wrapt in the fog that he saw nothing of the sun. He was a mediator. When men looked on him they saw something of the eternal light irradiating him; when God looked on him he was backgrounded by the grey cloud of human sorrow and sin. Consider how clouds are formed. They are due to the action of sun and moisture, not the one alone, and never the other alone. And the mist and the mystery that enwrap us in the spiritual atmosphere are likewise due to a double cause—not the tears of earth alone, but the play and interaction upon those of the drawing power of 'something afar from the sphere of our sorrow.'

And may it not be that our very despondency arises from our looking too much to success and too little to duty? 'We are poor soldiers,' said Dr John Ker, 'if we make our fealty to our banner depend so much upon its glittering in the sunshine of victory. God must have standard-bearers who are ready to make a shroud of their colours, and how can they be known but in hours of defeat?' Have you ever noticed the suggestive distinction that we make in two common and similar phrases, when we speak of 'the eyes of the world,' but, on the another hd, of 'the sight of God?' Eyes do not always see; and what has been overlooked

by the eyes of the world may be precious in the sight of God. Consider the plight of soul of a greater than Moses. In that same hour when He said of His redeeming work, 'It is finished,' the dark cloud came down upon Him and He tasted the full bitterness of the awful loneliness which feels itself shut out at once from tent and tabernacle, unable alike to penetrate the gloom or to behold the glory. But it was not a permanent plight. It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. But out of the battle, in the act and article of death, Jesus proclaimed aloud His victory, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Mankind was saved to God. The glory of the Father was at length unveiled: the cloud had lifted for evermore.¹

The Wilderness Journey

Exod. xl. 36-38.—'And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.'

1. LOOKING back upon the story, we can see more clearly the rationale of the Wilderness Journey—the forming and training of a nation. The Wilderness of Sinai was an ideal training ground for an emancipated people bent on territorial and spiritual conquest. Lying apart from both Egypt and Canaan, it afforded the Israelites a sequestered locus in which to get rid of the many vices and weaknesses contracted in their former environment, and to attain that degree of military, moral, and spiritual superiority necessary for success in the coming campaign. Frequently attacked by desert tribes they learned the arts of war and gained confidence in arms; continually obliged to face and overcome difficulties, their spirit was braced and ennobled; and being all the time dependent upon the goodness of God for sustenance, upon His wisdom for guidance, and upon His power for safety, they learned to know, trust, and obey Him.

Three things the Wilderness experience taught them about God. The daily manna and the water from the rock proclaimed His bounty; the Covenant which He made with them and

¹ Hubert L. Simpson, *Put Forth by the Moon*, 39.

the Law which He imposed on them, set forth His demand for righteousness; and His invisible presence in the cloud by day and the fire by night impressed upon them the conviction that He was leading them and would continue to lead them; and that He would at all times grant them the victory if they but continued to obey His commandments and follow faithfully in His way.

2. But the Journey through the Wilderness had a significance not only for the people who journeyed; it has had a meaning and message for all succeeding generations. The people of the Old Testament were reminded by it of some of the most encouraging truths of their faith, and, pondering it in their minds, were helped by its suggestive symbolism to a larger and fuller understanding of Divine things: while we of the New Testament are so accustomed to think our religious thoughts in terms of its localities, its tribulations, its dangers, and its consolations, that, as Dean Stanley says, it has become almost a part of our minds. 'The onward march of the history, the successive localities through which it takes us, at least till the conquest of Canaan, are an epitome of human life itself.'

Thus as an allegory—as a symbolical representation of the journey of life—the journey through the Wilderness is of perpetual interest, and its significance is universal. It has its place in God's Word, not simply to show us how the Israelites were trained and disciplined for the large and responsible part they were to play in Canaan; it is there to be to all pilgrims a sort of map of their spiritual experience—a repository of spiritual truths out of which we may construct a clear and helpful idea of the journey of life.

What are some of the salient features of the Christian view of life? Surely these—that to be truly lived, life must be regarded as a progress towards an end; that difficulty, trial, privation, delay, work towards an ultimate good and fit the soul for a larger service either in this life or in a life beyond; that life is provided for, both as regards things temporal and things spiritual; and that obedience to the eternal law is the essential condition for attaining true success—all which ideas are set forth in the Wilderness Allegory. For the Israelites had an end in view as they journeyed onwards; even

when stationary or wandering aimlessly about they knew that their ultimate destination was Canaan. Through forty years of trial and discipline they were purged, as we have seen, from their former weaknesses, and fitted for future service. The manna was given them for food, the water from the rock for drink, the pillars of cloud and fire to protect and guide them on the way. And when at Sinai the Law was given them and the Covenant made, it was impressed upon them that only by obeying the Divine commands would victory be theirs—a condition frequently reiterated, and frequently demonstrated both in victory and defeat. It was centuries after the Wilderness Journey that the philosophy which we call the Christian View of Life was systematically thought out; yet, when it was enunciated, it was found that long centuries beforehand many of its salient features had been symbolically formulated in the circumstances and experiences of this episode.

3. It is because the story of Israel's wanderings symbolizes our spiritual experience, and is so rich in those great truths about God, about the soul, and about life, that it has such power over our minds. But while it is an accurate description of spiritual experience, while we are very familiar with its localities, and are continually displaying its moods, we are not meant to reproduce exactly its episodes. The children of Israel did not march towards Canaan so well as they might have done. One would fancy from their almost continual murmuring, and the gloomy tradition which for centuries persisted among them, that they found their Wilderness experience irksome in the extreme. The Wilderness of Sinai, however, was by no means 'a desert drear.' Its sterile spaces were interspersed with stretching pastures, palm trees and wells, mountain summits and shady glens, and all along the route were so many gracious compensations, tokens of God's bounty and care, that it should have been to the wanderers, not as they described it, a 'waste howling wilderness,' but on the whole a pleasant place. And when we seek to explain why the pilgrim people were so oppressed with a sense of dreariness as they marched, we must find the cause not so much in the character of their environment as in the faithless and discontented state of their own hearts. If at all times they

had kept the glorious end of their march in view, and sought to appreciate the goodness of God, and to maintain a firm faith in Him, many of their discouraging and painful experiences would not have overtaken them.

It is an unwholesome thing to speak of earth as a desert, and to fancy that because the Israelites became disconsolate and weary there is nothing wrong in our becoming disconsolate and weary too. Earth is not, and is not meant to be, a desert. It becomes 'a desert drear' only to those who make it so. The aspect of our onward way is ever the reflection of our inward mood. The wilderness assumes the character which the spirit within us gives it. Therefore let us take our onward way in humble

dependence, in earnest obedience, with uplifted head and far-seeing eye.¹

'Forward!' be our watchword,

Steps and voices joined;

Seek the things before us,

Not a look behind;

Burns the fiery pillar

At our army's head;

Who shall dream of shrinking,

By Jehovah led?

Forward, marching forward,

Where the heaven is bright,

Till the veil be lifted,

Till our faith be sight.

¹ G. A. Smillie.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

COMMENTARIES FOR REFERENCE

See page 12

INDEX TO SERMONS

I. 5.

Morrison, G. H., *The Gateways of the Stars*, 95.

I. 6, 7.

Maclaren, A., *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 175.

I. 8.

Allan, C., *The New World*, 4.

Hutton, J. A., *The Victory over Victory*, 19.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxv. 280 (R. H. Turner).

I. 11.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxxix. 1 (J. D. Jones).

I. 14.

Lincoln, R., *Outspoken Addresses*, 15.

I. 17.

Christian World Pulpit, cviii. 217 (G. O. Griffith).

II.

Howard, J. H., *Jesus the Agitator*, 187.

II. 3.

Johnson, L., *The Legends of Israel*, 107.

II. 4.

Gray, W. H., *Our Divine Shepherd*, 111.

Lewis, H. E., in *Women of the Bible*: Rebekah to Priscilla, 35.

II. 10.

Gray, W. H., *Our Divine Shepherd*, 92.

II. 11.

Brown, C., *The Birth of a Nation*, 95.

II. 11, 12.

Rowland, A., in *The Ladder of Life*, 263.

II. 12.

Black, H., *Edinburgh S.*, 245.

Morrison, G. H., *The Wings of the Morning*, 288.

II. 15.

Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs*, 163.

III. 1.

Macbeath, J., *The Hills of God*, 220.

Christian World Pulpit, lxviii. 44 (E. E. Cleal).

III. 2.

Campbell, R. J., *S. Addressed to Individuals*, 207.

Holland, H. S., *So as by Fire*, 67.

Johnson, L., *The Legends of Israel*, 121.

Maclaren, A., *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 84.

British Congregationalist, July 30, 1908 (J. H. Jowett).

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lxxxvii. 221 (J. G. Simpson); xc. 163 (W. Mathison); cii. 73 (H. M. Hughes).

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III. 2, 3.

Hutton, J. A., *Our Only Safeguard*, 16.

III. 2-6.

Christian World Pulpit, cv. 280 (H. R. Trumpour).

III. 3.

Alexander, A., *A Day at a Time*, 169.
Carpenter, W. B., *The Burning Bush*, 3.
Lamond, J., *The Eternal Christ*, 17.
Martin, G. C., in *The Ladder of Life*, 181.
Norwood, F. W., *Moods of the Soul*, 166.
Simpson, H. L., *The Intention of His Soul*, 135.
Simpson, J. G., *Great Ideas of Religion*, 243.
Sykes, T., *The Price of Providence*, 7.
Christian World Pulpit, cxl. 63 (H. Mills).

III. 3, 4.

Christian World Pulpit, cii. 21 (F. N. Scott).

III. 3, 6.

Simpson, H. L., *The Nameless Longing*, 78.

III. 4.

Brooks, P., *Christ the Life and Light*, 20.
Craig, A. C., *University S.*, 77.
Macpherson, Ian, *This Man Loved Me*, 43.
Reid, J., *The Springs of Life*, 236.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxii. 237 (G. K. Grice); cxx. 289 (T. Yates).

III. 5.

McFadyen, J. E., *The Divine Pursuit*, 25.
Macnutt, F. B., *The Riches of Christ*, 154.
Paterson, W. P., *In the Day of the Ordeal*, 147.
Patten, J. A., *The Decoration of the Cross*, 130.
Selby, T. G., *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, 123.
Christian World Pulpit, cxxviii. 135 (B. Pollock).
Inquirer, Oct. 30, 1915 (L. P. Jacks).
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III. 5, 6.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxiii. 267 (W. R. Shepherd).

III. 6.

Carroll, J. S., *The Motherhood of God*, 128.
Tuckwell, W., *Nuggets from the Bible Mine*, 268.

III. 6-14.

Christian World Pulpit, lix. 352 (J. Clifford).

III. 7, 8, 10, 12.

Brown, C., *The Birth of a Nation*, 107.

III. 10.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxviii. 51 (H. Cook).

III. 11.

McFadyen, J. E., *The Divine Pursuit*, 167.
Christian World Pulpit, lxvi. 267 (E. E. Cleal).
Record of Christian Work, 1919, p. 834 (H. E. Kirk).

III. 11, 12.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxxv. 257 (R. J. Campbell); cxxxiv. 131 (R. Smith).
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III. 11-13.

Christian World Pulpit, liii. 101 (G. Hanson).
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III. 13, 14.

Macbeath, J., *What is His Name?*, 11.
Christian World Pulpit, cxi. 93 (T. Houghton).

III. 14.

Storr, V. F., *The Living God*, 70.
Thomas, A. L., *Things that Matter*, 28.
Whyte, A., *The Spiritual Life*, i. 231.
Canadian Journal, vi. (1929), 367 (H. S. Coffin).
Christian World Pulpit, civ. 1 (A. S. Peake).

III. 14, 15.

Macgregor, W. M., in *United Free Church S.*, 123.

III. 15.

Berry, C. A., *Vision and Duty*, 3.
Burney, C. F., *The Gospel in the O.T.*, 25.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiii. 170 (T. Nicholson); cxxii. 167 (A. N. Rowland).

III. 16.

Mursell, W. A., *The Waggon and the Star*, 115.

IV. 1.

Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs*, 163.

IV. 2.

Burton, H., *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 143.
Greenhough, J. G., *Half-Hours in God's Older Picture Gallery*, 47.
Holden, J. S., *The God-Lit Road*, 149.
McClure, J. G. K., *Supreme Things*, 69.

British Weekly, May 4, 1939 (J. Reid).

Christian World Pulpit, cxx. 112 (R. M. Gautrey); cxxxiv. 69 (S. Macnab); cxxxviii. 124 (E. W. Bacon); cxxxix. 79 (R. W. Morley).

Record of Christian Work, 1927, p. 113 (W. H. Foulkes).

IV. 3, 4.

Peck, G. C., *Vision and Task*, 221.

IV. 4.

Aked, C. F., *The Courage of the Coward*, 257.
Christian World Pulpit, lxvi. 171 (C. F. Aked).

IV. 10.

Norwood, F. W., *Moods of the Soul*, 180.

IV. 10-12.

Watkinson, W. L., *The Fairness of Trial*, 22.

IV. 14.

Lewis, H. E., in *Men of the O.T. : Cain to David*, 145.

Moffatt, J., *His Gifts and Promises*, 1.

IV. 17.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxviii. 284 (J. S. Rees).

IV. 30.

Robertson, A. T., *Passing on the Torch*, 52.

V. 1.

Record of Christian Work, 1926, p. 202 (J. A. Hutton).

V. 2.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxxviii. 265 (J. Warschauer).

Guardian, xc. (1935), 814 (R. M. Gibson).

V. 14-19.

Christian World Pulpit, lxviii. 349 (L. M. Watt).

V. 17.

Black, H., *According to My Gospel*, 185.

V. 18.

Homiletic Review, lxiii. 397 (A. H. M. Sime).

V. 22.

Christian World Pulpit, cxv. 10 (E. Beal).

VI. 2, 3.

Christian Commonwealth, xxx. (1910), 709 (R. J. Campbell).

VI. 4.

Hackett, W. S., *The Land of Your Sojournings*, 11.

VI. 6.

Patten, J. A., *The Decoration of the Cross*, 166.

VI. 9.

Fosdick, H. E., *The Hope of the World*, 34.
Macgregor, W. M., *Repentance unto Life*, 37.

VIII. 19.

Drummond, R. J., *Faith's Perplexities*, 135.

VIII. 20.

Brailsford, E. J., *Thoughts at Sunrise*, 89.
Nash, L. L., *Early Morning Scenes*, 88.

IX. 1.

Brooke, S. A., *The O.T. and Modern Life*, 129, 143.

IX. 16.

Dale, W., *Short Studies on Bible Subjects*, 29.

IX. 29, 30.

Brooks, P., *New Starts in Life*, 337.

X. 20.

Ingram, A. F. W., *The Spirit of Peace*, 107.

X. 21-23.

Christian World Pulpit, cxviii. 142 (J. Wills).

X. 26.

Macmillan, E., *Seeking and Finding*, 167.
Taylor, C., *Life's Unknown Demands*, 7.

XI. 10.

Guardian, lxvii. (1912), 502 (J. M. Wilson).

XII. 2.

Christian World Pulpit, ci. 57 (A. R. Tomlin).

XII. 11.

Burrell, D. J., *The Wondrous Cross*, 135.
Christian World Pulpit, cxx. 199 (J. Pickthall).

XII. 26.

Almond, H. H., *Christ the Protestant*, 157.
Cowan, A. A., *Crisis on the Frontier*, 50.
Knight, W., *Things New and Old*, 70, 82.
Milligan, G., in *Eden and Gethsemane*, 71.
Watt, L. M., in *Communion Addresses*, 181.
Christian World Pulpit, cviii. 75 (D. E. James);
cxxx. 64 (W. H. Aldis).

XII. 26, 27.

Whyte, A., *With Mercy and with Judgment*, 275.

XII. 27.

Chadwick, W. E., *Through Discipline to Victory*,
133.

XII. 30.

Christian World Pulpit, lix. 91 (A. Ainger).

XII. 41.

Macgregor, G. H. C., *Messages of the O.T.*, 17.

XIII. 17.

Archibald, M. G., *Sundays at the Royal Military
College*, 223.
Morrison, G. H., *Sun-rise*, 64.

XIII. 17, 18.

Alexander, A., *The Stuff of Life*, 57.
Black, J., *According to My Gospel*, 25.
Macaulay, A. B., *The Word of the Cross*, 91.
Watkinson, W. L., *The Ashes of Roses*, 177.
British Weekly, Nov. 28, 1935; Nov. 7, 1940
(J. Reid).
Christian World Pulpit, xcvi. 31 (A. T. S.
James); cxix. 256 (J. O. Ritchie); cxxxi. 116
(S. Luke).
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XIII. 18.

British Weekly, Oct. 27, 1938 (J. Reid).

XIII. 19.

Simpson, H. L., *The Intention of His Soul*, 24.
Young, D. T., *Unfamiliar Texts*, 102.

XIII. 21.

Watkinson, W. L., *The Fatal Barter*, 110.
Christian World Pulpit, lxii. 415 (G. H. Morrison);
cv. 262 (J. Gibb); cxxxvi. 11 (W. J. Aston).

XIII. 21, 22.

Johnson, L., *The Legends of Israel*, 149.

XIV. 2.

Christian Commonwealth, xxxi. (1910), 233 (R. J.
Campbell).

XIV. 3.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxiv. 135 (M. Green).

XIV. 10.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxviii. 22 (W. M.
Simm).

XIV. 13.

Christian World Pulpit, xcvi. 257 (A. T. S.
James).

XIV. 13, 14.

Christian World Pulpit, cxv. 236 (R. M.
Gautrey).

XIV. 15.

Alexander, A., *The Glory in the Grey*, 239.
Bowie, W. R., *When Christ Passes By*, 121.
Brown, H. S., *Manliness*, 356.
Burney, C. F., *The Gospel in the O.T.*, 40.
Catterall, R., *Gospel Messages*, 95.
Hutton, J. A., *Let Us Go Forward*, 3.
Ingram, A. F. W., *Victory and After*, 16.
Maclean, A., *Walk in the Light*, 92.
Christian World Pulpit, lxi. 253 (J. H. Daven-
port); lxvi. 168 (W. R. Taylor); lxviii. 395
(H. H. Snell); lxxxvii. 209 (G. C. Morgan);
xcii. 159 (A. F. Forrest); xciii. 44 (H.
Ranston), 229 (W. R. Inge); cxvi. 83 (J. F.
Newton); cxxvi. 31 (R. M. Gautrey);
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Morgan).

XIV. 15, 16.

Banks, L. A., *S. which have won Souls*, 175.

XIV. 19, 20.

Johnson, L., *The Legends of Israel*, 149.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxii. 57 (N. M. Wright).

XIV. 20.

Hackett, W. S., *The Land of Your Sojournings*, 169.

XIV. 30.

Brooks, P., *The Mystery of Iniquity*, 55.
Brown, C., *The Birth of a Nation*, 130.
Stewart, J. S., *The Gates of New Life*, 121.
Christian World Pulpit, cxix. 71 (E. Beal).

XV. 2.

Mackay, D. S., *The Religion of the Threshold*, 343.

XV. 3.

Glazebrook, M. G., *The End of the Law*, 13.

XV. 11.

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XV. 20.

Christian World Pulpit, lxvii. 38 (J. G. Stevenson).

XV. 20, 21.

Banks, L. A., *The Great Saints of the Bible*, 108.

XV. 21.

Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 102.

XV. 22-26.

Jewish Chronicle, Feb. 6, 1914.

XV. 23.

Jones, J. D., *The Unfettered Word*, 19.
Lockyer, T. F., *Seeking a Country*, 82.
Stewart, G., *God and Pain*, 99.
Tuttle, A. H., *Egypt to Canaan*, 121.
Christian World Pulpit, lxvii. 62 (T. L. Cuyler).

XV. 23-25.

Campbell, R. J., *New Theology S.*, 274.
Christian World Pulpit, cii. 92 (J. Macmillan).

XV. 25.

Clark, H. W., *Laws of the Inner Kingdom*, 180.
Wray, J. J., *Honey in the Comb*, 37.

XV. 26.

Macbeath, J., *What is His Name?*, 37.
Macmillan, H., *The Mystery of Grace*, 18.
Masterman, J. H. B., *The Challenge of Christ*, 71.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Titles of Jehovah*, 38.
Whitelaw, T., *Jehovah-Jesus*, 39.
Christian World Pulpit, cxxxii. 172 (W. J. Roderick).

XV. 27.

Jones, J. D., *Elms of Life*, 171.
Robinson, J. W., *Hearts Aflame*, 173.
Smellie, A., *Sunset Glory*, 40.
Wakinshaw, W., *The Headsprings of Life*, 110.
Christian World Pulpit, lxvi. 87 (C. S. Horne);
cii. 146 (J. Macmillan); civ. 280 (E. M. Drew).

XVI. 3.

Record of Christian Work, 1918, p. 469 (J. D. Jones).

XVI. 7.

Stewart, J. S., *The Strong Name*, 239.

XVI. 8.

Watkinson, W. L., *The Fairness of Trial*, 137.

XVI. 15.

Kerr, C. C., in *The Keswick Convention*, 1934,
p. 112.
Morrison, G. H., *The Ever Open Door*, 47.
Wray, J. J., *Honey in the Comb*, 181.
Christian World Pulpit, xc. 278 (J. Macmillan);
cxvii. 77 (J. K. Graham).

XVI. 18.

Gladden, W., *Where does the Sky Begin?*, 303.

XVI. 20.

Jeffrey, G. J., *Christian Intimacies*, 102.

XVI. 21.

Archibald, A., *Feathers on the Moor*, 54.
Jeffs, H., *In the Father's House*, 217.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxix. 109 (H. Jeffs);
cxxxviii. 222 (R. H. Turner).

XVI. 29.

Christian World Pulpit, lxx. 1 (R. F. Horton).

XVI. 31.

Scott, A. B., *Spoken at the Holy Table*, 82.
Christian World Pulpit, xc. 278 (J. Macmillan).

XVII. 7.

Shepherd, A., *Bible Studies in Living Subjects*, 283.

XVII. 11.

Hutton, J. A., *Discerning the Times*, 78.
Ingram, A. F. W., *Under the Dome*, 75.
Jack, J., *A Great National Question*, 35.
Newton, J. F., *The Sword of the Spirit*, 139.
Smith, L., in *War and Christianity*, 30.
Christian Commonwealth, xxxv. (1914), 5 (R. J. Campbell).
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XVII. 11, 12.

Macmillan, E., *Seeking and Finding*, 123.
Christian World Pulpit, cxli. 20 (E. N. Martin).

XVII. 12.

Christian World Pulpit, cxvi. 212 (J. G. Bowran).

XVII. 15.

Macbeath, J., *What is His Name?*, 53.
Maclaren, A., *Creed and Conduct*, 251.
Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 252.
Webb-Peploe, H. W., *The Titles of Jehovah*, 60.
Yates, T., *A Happy Warrior*, 145.
Christian World Pulpit, cxviii. 102 (T. Yates).

XVIII. 3, 4.

Maclaren, A., *Leaves from the Tree of Life*, 287.

XX. 1.

Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 37.
Joscelyne, A. E., *The Voices of God*, 17.
Lockyer, T. F., *The Inspirations of the Christian Life*, 19.

XX. 1, 2.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 11.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 7.
Christian World Pulpit, lxi. 214 (G. S. Barrett).

XX. 1-3.

Christian World Pulpit, lxix. 264 (H. S. Holland).

XX. 2.

Boreham, F. W., *A Handful of Stars*, 56.

XX. 2, 3.

Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 20.
Gore, C., *Christian Moral Principles*, 14.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 53.
Christian World Pulpit, lvii. 155 (C. Gore); lxix 280 (H. S. Holland).

XX. 2-6.

Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 3.

XX. 3.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 27.
Barnes, E. W., *Should Such a Faith Offend?*, 201.
Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 13.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 105.
Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 27.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 32.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 12.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 3.
Christian World Pulpit, lvii. 61 (G. C. Morgan); lxi. 264 (G. S. Barrett); cxxxiv. 105 (W. H. Haden).

XX. 4.

Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 33.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 123.
Fawkes, A., *The Church a Necessary Evil*, 56.

XX. 4, 5.

Black, H., *According to My Gospel*, 38.

XX. 4-6.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 43.
Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 38.
Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 28.
Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 41.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 54.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 30.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 81.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 17.
Christian World Pulpit, lvii. 161 (C. Gore), 347 (G. C. Morgan); lxi. 358 (G. S. Barrett); lxxviii. 337 (J. E. Rattenbury).

XX. 5.

Morrison, G. H., *The Wind on the Heath*, 70.
Orchard, W. E., *The Safest Mind Cure*, 161.
Guardian, lxxxv. (1930), 622 (H. J. White).

XX. 5, 6.

Bernard, J. H., *Via Domini*, 92.
Christian World Pulpit, li. 74 (A. H. M. Sime);
 xcix. 104 (C. McEvoy).

XX. 7.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 59.
 Bellamy, R. L., *The Unruly Member*, 88.
 Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 53.
 Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 61.
 Davidson, R. T., *Captains and Comrades in the Faith*, 150.
 — *The Testing of a Nation*, 141.
 Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 42.
 Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 143.
 Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 17.
 Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 61.
 McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 78.
 Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 50.
 Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 99.
 Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 29.
Christian World Pulpit, lvii. 301 (G. C. Morgan);
 lxii. 27 (G. S. Barrett); lxxii. 218 (R. T. Davidson).
Expositor, xxxi. (1930) 1401 (C. H. Nabers).

XX. 8.

Blackburn, W. E., *Christ Shows the Way*, 115.
 Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 73.
 Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 163.
 Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 31.
 Fraser, F. S. G., *Ambassador in Bonds*, 92.
Christian World Pulpit, xcvi. 113 (E. J. Jones);
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XX. 8-10.

Christian World Pulpit, cviii. 79 (C. Gore).

XX. 8-11.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 75.
 Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 82.
 Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 55.
 Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 79.
 McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 99.
 Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 64.
 Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 113.
 Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 41.
Christian World Pulpit, lxii. 84 (G. S. Barrett).

XX. 8, 17.

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XX. 9.

Sclater, J. R. P., *The Enterprise of Life*, 208.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxi. 44 (H. B. Ottley).

XX. 10.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxxvi. 153 (W. S. Kelyack).

XX. 12.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 89.
 Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 93.
 Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 113.
 Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 72.
 Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 187.
 Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 97.
 McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 119.
 Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 79.
 Moule, H. C. G., *Cathedral and University S.*, 123.
 Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 131.
 Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 61.
Christian World Pulpit, lxii. 139 (G. S. Barrett).
Expositor, xxxi. (1930) 1405 (C. H. Nabers).

XX. 12, 14.

Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 45.

XX. 13.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 105.
 Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 113.
 Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 138.
 Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 85.
 Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 209.
 Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 59.
 Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 117.
 McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 138.
 Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 103.
 Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 149.
 Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 73.
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Expositor, xxxi. (1930) 1410 (C. H. Nabers).

XX. 13, 14.

Barrow, E. P., *The Way not a Sect*, 63.

XX. 14.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 121.
Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 133.
Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 161.
Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 97.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 233.
Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 133.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 124.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 169.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 89.

XX. 15.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 135.
Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 155.
Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 186.
Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 110.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 257.
Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 73
Howard, H., *A Love that Lifts*, 24.
Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 149.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 155, 172.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 146.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 185.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 103.
Christian World Pulpit, lxii. 416 (G. S. Barrett).
Expository Times, xlviii. 84 (A. E. Garvie).

XX. 16.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 151.
Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 179.
Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 207.
Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 123.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 281.
Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 87.
Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 165.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 195.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 164.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 199.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 119.
Welldon, J. E. C., *The Fire upon the Altar*, 217.
Christian World Pulpit, lxiii. 35 (G. S. Barrett);
lxxviii. 38 (F. Cairns); lxxix. 232 (H. F. B.
Mackay).
Expository Times, xlviii. 101 (J. Moffatt).

XX. 17.

Aitken, J., *The Abiding Law*, 165.
Coffin, H. S., *The Ten Commandments*, 199.
Dale, R. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 229.
Eyton, R., *The Ten Commandments*, 136.
Farrar, F. W., *The Ten Commandments*, 303, 321.

Fletcher, R. J., *The Old Law and the New Age*, 101.

Jackson, G., *The Ten Commandments*, 179.
McAfee, C. B., *The Mosaic Law*, 212.
Morgan, G. C., *The Ten Commandments*, 182.
Ottley, R. L., *The Rule of Life and Love*, 213.
Powell, J. H., *The Ten Commandments*, 135.
Christian World Pulpit, lxiii. 123 (G. S. Barrett).
Expository Times, xlviii. 155 (H. G. Wood).

XX. 20.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxxii. 385 (G. C. Morgan).

XX. 21.

Macgregor, W. M., *Christ and the Church*, 294.
Christian Commonwealth, xxxiv. (1914) 385
(R. J. Campbell).

XX. 24.

Roberts, R. E., *The Hope of the World*, 96.

XXI. 5.

Mackintosh, H. R., *The Highway of God*, 183.
Smellie, A., *Service and Inspiration*, 3.
Christian World Pulpit, cxiv. 27 (H. C. Vincent).

XXI. 13.

Homiletic Review, lxii. 308 (N. H. Marshall).

XXI. 29.

Cocker, J., *A Man-Killing Ox*, 36.

XXIII. 2.

Burn, A. E., *The Crown of Thorns*, 44.
Jewish Chronicle, Feb. 20, 1914.

XXIII. 9.

Stewart, A., *Shoes for the Road*, 192.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxix. 241 (T. Yates).

XXIII. 12.

Christian World Pulpit, lviii. 248 (J. H. Shakespeare).

XXIII. 16.

Berrington, L. G., in *Twenty Harvest Homilies*,
ed. Burn, 110.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

XXIII. 19.

Christian World Pulpit, civ. 171 (A. R. Tomlin);
cxxxiii. 287 (F. W. Boreham).

XXIII. 29, 30.

Davidson, D., *The Issues of Life*, 67.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxviii. 189 (A. C.
Tarbolton).

XXIII. 30.

Philip, A., *The Father's Hand*, 3.

XXIV. 6-9.

Waterston, R., *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, 70.

XXIV. 9-11.

Cooke, G. A., *The Progress of Revelation*, 15.

XXIV. 11.

Milligan, G., in *Eden and Gethsemane*, 185.
Morrison, G. H., *The Return of the Angels*, 235.
Stewart, J. S., *The Strong Name*, 206.
Waterston, R., *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, 18.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxii. 189 (E. M. Drew);
cx. 268 (G. W. Crutchley).

XXIV. 16.

Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 224.

XXV. 8.

Christian World Pulpit, xcvi. 198 (J. Mac-
millan).
Jewish Chronicle, Feb. 19, 1915.

XXV. 8, 9.

Christian World Pulpit, cvi. 205 (T. R. Williams).

XXV. 8, 22.

Whitworth, W. A., *The Sanctuary of God*, 1.

XXV. 18.

Christian World Pulpit, lii. 263 (T. Jones).

XXV. 40.

Greenhough, J. G., in *Great Texts of the O.T.*, 295.
Christian World, May 3, 1923 (J. A. Hutton).
Christian World Pulpit, lxxx. 67 (H. Bulcock).

XXVII. 1.

Holden, J. S., *A Book of Remembrance*, 251.

XXVII. 3-8.

Christian World Pulpit, lxix. 187 (N. H.
Marshall).

XXVII. 20.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxviii. 42 (A. B. Scott).

XXVIII. 12, 29.

Maclaren, A., *The Beatitudes*, 264.

XXVIII. 29.

Harris, J. R., *Aaron's Breastplate*, 1.

XXVIII. 33.

Chapman, J. W., *Bells of Gold*, 9.

XXVIII. 33-35.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxix. 163 (E. R.
Squire).

XXVIII. 34.

Farrar, F. W., *Bells and Pomegranates*, 3.

XXVIII. 36.

Clark, M. G., in *The Keswick Convention*, 1938,
p. 273.
Maclaren, A., *The Beatitudes*, 272.
Christian World Pulpit, l. 232 (R. J. Horton).

XXVIII. 38.

Watkinson, W. L., *Themes for Hours of Medita-
tion*, 66.

XXIX. 18.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxxii. 297 (H. W.
Shepherd-Walwyn).

XXIX. 43.

Christian World Pulpit, xlv. 74 (A. Rowland).

XXX. 1-8, 34-38.

Christian World, May 30, 1912 (G. H. Morrison).

XXX. 2.

Christian World Pulpit, cxii. 131 (W. J. Farley).

XXX. 7.

Morrison, G. H., *The Ever Open Door*, 259.
Christian World Pulpit, cxxxi. 33 (E. R. Squire).

XXX. 12, 13.

Mantle, J. G., *According to the Pattern*, 25.

XXXI. 1-3.

Christian World Pulpit, lii. 330 (W. G. Horder).

XXXI. 13.

Macbeath, J., *What is His Name?*, 67.

XXXII. 1.

Jewish Chronicle, March 5, 1915.

XXXII. 1, 15, 19.

Macbeath, J., *The Hills of God*, 106.

XXXII. 5.

Patten, J. A., *Faces through the Mist*, 93.

XXXII. 9.

Expositor, xxxix. (1937) 75 (J. A. Lazell).

XXXII. 10, 31, 32.

Selby, T. G., *The God of the Patriarchs*, 185.

XXXII. 17, 18.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxix. 186 (N. Goodall).

XXXII. 18.

Mackay, W. M., *Bible Types of Modern Women*, 169.

XXXII. 19.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiv. 61 (G. A. Hillyar-Russ).

XXXII. 20.

Whyte, A., *The Spiritual Life*, i. 139.

XXXII. 24.

Badenoch, A., *The Gift of Vision*, 26.
Halsey, J., *The Spirit of Truth*, 261.
Christian World, March 11, 1943 (D. W. Langridge).
Homiletic Review, xxxix. 320 (N. D. Hillis).

XXXII. 26.

Hutton, J. A., *At Close Quarters*, 101.

XXXII. 29.

Watts-Ditchfield, J. E., *Here and Hereafter*, 27.

XXXII. 31, 32.

Macfarlane, W. H., *Redemptive Service*, 236.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiv. 356 (N. H. Marshall).

XXXII. 32.

Newton, J. F., *The Sword of the Spirit*, 151.
Christian Commonwealth, xxxviii. (1918) 193 (J. F. Newton).
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiv. 276 (W. E. Orchard).

XXXIII. 6.

Macbeath, J., *The Hills of God*, 220.
Morrison, G. H., *The Afterglow of God*, 75.

XXXIII. 7.

Christian World Pulpit, cxxii. 186 (G. Shillito).

XXXIII. 11.

Campbell, R. J., *City Temple S.*, 27.
Dawson, W. J., *The Evangelistic Note*, 211.
— *The Endless Choice*, 25.
Means, S., *Parish S.*, 61.
Miller, J. H., *Sunday Mornings in the School Chapel*, 61.
Christian World Pulpit, lxix. 273 (C. Brown);
cxxvi. 1 (J. F. Newton).

XXXIII. 13-15.

Greenhough, J. G., *Christian Festivals and Anniversaries*, 10.

XXXIII. 14.

Jowett, J. H., *The Silver Lining*, 60.
Knox, D. B., *The Haunted Heart*, 112.
Moule, H. C. G., *Thoughts for the Sundays of the Year*, 9.
Smellie, A., *Out of the Desert a Gift*, 137.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxv. 22 (C. Brown);
cxxxix. 23 (W. R. Milne); cxxxiv. 232 (F. C. Lloyd).
Expositor, xli. (1939) 407 (J. M. Younginer).

XXXIII. 14, 15.

- McKim, R. H., *The Gospel in the Christian Year*, 61.
 Moore, A. L., *The Message of the Gospel*, 127.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxiii. 316 (A. M. Fairbairn).

XXXIII. 15.

- Reid, J., *Making Friends with Life*, 230.
Christian World Pulpit, xc. 5 (W. Jobson);
 cxxiii. 15 (A. J. Grieve).
Guardian, lxxviii. (1913) 37 (P. Green).

XXXIII. 17.

- Murphy, J. B. C., *The Service of the Master*, 117.

XXXIII. 18.

- Hankey, W. B., *The Church and the Saints*, 111.
 Mackay, H., in *The Free Church Pulpit*, 223.
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XXXIII. 18, 19.

- Black, H., *Edinburgh S.*, 156.
 Wilberforce, B., *Following on to Know the Lord*,
 57.
Christian World Pulpit, cix. 135 (W. R. Inge).
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 Inge).

XXXIII. 18-22.

- Burrell, D. J., *The Cloister Book*, 10.

XXXIII. 20.

- McKeehan, H. D., *The Patrimony of Life*, 68.

XXXIII. 21.

- Brown, C., *The War and the Faith*, 135.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiii. 132 (H. C. Over);
 lxxxv. 276 (J. G. James).
Record of Christian Work, 1928, p. 91 (R. R.
 Littell).

XXXIII. 21-23.

- Peabody, F. G., *Afternoons in the College Chapel*,
 76.

XXXIII. 22.

- Christian World Pulpit*, xcv. 293 (G. W. Smith).

XXXIII. 22, 23.

- Norwood, F. W., *The Gospel of the Larger World*,
 84.

XXXIII. 23.

- Whiton, J. M., *Reconsiderations and Reinforce-
 ments*, 104.
British Congregationalist, June 13, 1912 (G. E.
 Darlaston).
Christian World Pulpit, cxxxvii. 121 (R. G.
 Ramsay).

XXXIV. 1.

- Holden, J. S., *Your Reasonable Service*, 11.
Christian World Pulpit, lxxxiv. 61 (G. A.
 Hillyar-Russ).

XXXIV. 1, 4.

- Christian World Pulpit*, lxxxvi. 188 (P. R.
 Frothingham).

XXXIV. 1-10, 27-35.

- Davidson, A. B., *The Called of God*, 129.

XXXIV. 2.

- Brailsford, E. J., *Thoughts at Sunrise*, 33.

XXXIV. 5.

- Dudden, F. H., *The Heroic Dead*, 94.
 Halsey, J., *The Spirit of Truth*, 34.

XXXIV. 6, 7.

- Sanday, W., *Inspiration*, 435.

XXXIV. 8.

- Whyte, A., *Lord Teach Us to Pray*, 52.

XXXIV. 12.

- Burns, J., *Laws of the Upward Life*, 71.

XXXIV. 14.

- Selby, T. G., *The Lesson of a Dilemma*, 102.

XXXIV. 26.

- Christian World Pulpit*, civ. 171 (A. R. Tomlin).

XXXIV. 29.

- Ashby, L., *To Whom Shall We Go?*, 35.
 Back, W. J., in *A Book of Lay S.*, 247.
 Halsey, J., *The Beauty of the Lord*, 18.
 Kerr, C. C., in *The Keswick Convention*, 1934,
 p. 112.
 Kingsland, J. P., *Visions of God*, 86.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Macbeath, J., *The Hills of God*, 40.
 McFadyen, J. E., *Thoughts for Silent Hours*, 95.
 Maclaren, A., *The God of the Amen*, 259.
 Stalker, J., *The New Song*, 154.
 Stewart, A., *Shoes for the Road*, 39.
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 cxxv. 83 (G. B. Austin).
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XXXIV. 30.

Christian World Pulpit, lxxx. 396 (J. B. Munro).

XXXIV. 34, 35.

Williams, T. R., *God's Open Doors*, 94.

XXXV. 21.

Farrar, F. W., *Social and Present Day Questions*,
 95.
Christian World Pulpit, xciv. 158 (W. Marshall).

XXXV. 30, 31.

Carlile, J. C., *Vision and Vocation*, 147.
Christian World Pulpit, cxxi. 305 (J. C. Carlile).

XXXV. 30-34.

Christian World Pulpit, xxviii. 312 (F. Hastings).

XXXVI. 1.

Farrar, F. W., *Social and Present Day Questions*,
 161.
Christian World Pulpit, xxix. 363 (F. W. Farrar).

XXXVI. 2.

Thomas, H. A., *The Way of Life*, 73.

XXXVII. 1-7.

Kelman, J., *The Courts of the Temple*, 11.

XL. 33, 34.

Webb-Peploe, H. W., in *The Keswick Week*,
 1908, p. 200.
Christian World Pulpit, cxxvii. 109 (G. C.
 Morgan).

XL. 35.

Simpson, H. L., *Put Forth by the Moon*, 39.

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